

PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Spring 2008 Volume 15, Issue 2

A MESSAGE FROM ROYDEN N. POWELL, III, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Thomas Edison said, "There is no substitute for hard work." This spring at MDA, we have taken this quote to heart. During the last several months we have been hard at work supporting the Governor's BayStat Program, advising the Maryland Department of the Environment in its efforts to expand regulations for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, consulting with our partners on the reauthorization of CREP and putting the finishing touches on participation requirements for the 2008-2009 Cover Crop Program.

Introduced by Governor Martin O'Malley last year, BayStat is a powerful tool designed to assess, coordinate, target and evaluate Maryland's Chesapeake Bay restoration programs and to inform citizens on progress. Each month Governor O'Malley meets with the BayStat team comprised of representatives from the Maryland Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources and Planning as well as scientists from the University of Maryland and other key advisors. The aim is to make certain that the Bay restoration work stays the course by providing a regular forum to gauge progress, evaluate program effectiveness and adjust efforts where needed. Citizens can access the BayStat site at www.baystat.maryland.gov.

Over the last several months, MDA has been working closely with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in its efforts to update existing permit requirements for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). The new requirements would call for about 200 of the state's largest poultry operations to also get a state permit. The goal of this process is reduce potential water quality impacts from all operations with large numbers of animals.

Earlier this spring, MDA assisted MDE in hosting a series of public meetings for more than 300 farmers and other stakeholders to comment on the draft permit requirements. MDE is currently revising the permit based on these comments. The revised draft should be published at any time. To check on its status, visit MDE's website at www.mde.state.md.us/Permits/WaterManagementPermits/cafo.asp.

In other areas, MDA is working with our conservation partners to reauthorize the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and, in the process, simplify program participation for farmers. Some of the things we are looking at include a uniform buffer incentive, an easier sign-up process with less red tape and a reenrollment incentive aimed at maintaining current participation levels.

CONGRESS PASSES 2008 FARM BILL—PRESIDENT THREATENS VETO

Maryland's two Senators and eight Representatives all supported the 2008 Farm Bill conference report which contains additional funds for conservation activities in the Chesapeake Bay. The President has threatened to veto the bill but Congressional support for the bill was strong and a veto override is expected.

Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley praised passage of the bill. "This legislation, if enacted, will bring crucial and substantial funding to help restore the Chesapeake Bay. The bill also contains funding that will help keep farming in Maryland profitable and sustainable, and allow for the continued growth of the sustainable energy industry in our State," he said.

The bill increases spending for working lands conservation programs and provides needed certainty for the next five years. It also maintains a strong commitment to the locally-led conservation delivery system.

SINE DIE REPORT BY LYNNE HOOT, MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The tight budget and anti-agriculture sentiment that preceded the 2008 legislative session made the prospects of a successful session seem daunting. With the session now over however, I believe we can feel good about several of the outcomes.

Annual Salary Review: As far as we can tell without seeing the final budget (it has not been printed as of 4/14), the ASR remained intact throughout the 2008 session and now professional state employees in the soil conservation districts should be entitled to a one-grade increase across the board, regardless of classification. The ASR includes planners, technicians, district managers, soil conservation engineers, soil conservation engineering technicians, and area coordinators.

Office of Resource Conservation Budget: The Office of Resource Conservation received no specific cuts during the legislative budget process, but during the final changes to the budget when the computer tax was removed, part of the funds were recaptured by a tax on the 6,000 individuals with incomes over \$1m, and the remaining amount was left up to the Governor to allocate cuts. At this time, those cuts have not been made.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued on page 7)

PERSONNEL NOTES

MDA WELCOMES...

Veronica Brake, Secretary, Nutrient Management

MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Jason Keppler, Grant Program Coordinator, RCO

Michele Esch, Administrator, MACS

Kristin Fisher, SC Planner, Montgomery SCD

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Becky Hickman, secretary for the State Office Soils staff, accepted a position with NRCS Oklahoma in Stillwater, Oklahoma on April 28, 2008. She will serve as the secretary on the Ecological Sciences Staff in Stillwater.

Patrick Barry, formerly the District Conservationist in Queen Anne's County, transferred within NRCS to serve as District Conservationist in Ithaca, New York on February 17, 2008.

Jim Cary, formerly the District Conservationist in Charles and St. Mary's Counties, retired from Federal Service and moved to Surprise, Arizona on March 3, 2008

Melissa Hanner, formerly a Soil Scientist at the State Office, transferred to NRCS Portland, Oregon on March 16, 2008. Melissa continues her Soil Science career as part of the Remote Sensing Lab team in Portland.

Charles Hanner, formerly a soil scientist working in Talbot County, relocated to Portland, Oregon on March 16, 2008.

Tony Harvey, an engineer located in Salisbury, has accepted a position with NRCS in Gainesville, Florida effective June 9, 2008. He will work in the Florida State Office on the engineering staff as an Agricultural Engineer. Tony was also the Chair for the Maryland Civil Rights Committee.

NRCS ANNOUNCES NEW ASSIGNMENTS...

Terry Heinard, formerly the District Conservationist in Caroline County, began working as the District Conservationist in St. Mary's County covering the St. Mary's and Charles Counties Administrative Area on April 13, 2008.

Patricia Sanders, detail assignment as Contract Specialist on the Administrative Management Team at the State Office has been extended until May 16, 2008.

IN MEMORIUM...

Norman Alf Berg, 90, of Edgewater and previously of Severna Park, died of complications from a heart attack March 18th at Washington Hospital Center. He worked for the US Department of Agriculture for nearly 40 years, working in Idaho and South Dakota as deputy and associate Chief. He was appointed chief of the Soil Conservation Service at the Department of Agriculture in 1979. He retired in April of 1982, and became the senior advisor to the American Farmland Trust, where he continued to work until the time of his death. He was a district supervisor for the Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District from 1982 to the present. During his career, he received numerous awards and honors for his work; in 1998, the Secretary of Agriculture named him Chief Emeritus of the National Resources Conservation Service. He will be greatly missed.

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 2008 Canon Envirothon, North America's largest and most prestigious natural resources event for high school students. Students participating in the Envirothon have been studying the state's natural resources for the past year. They have learned from the experts how to identify and categorize living resources, perform soil surveys, estimate wood yield from trees, and solve other complex natural resource issues.

Teams are tested in five areas: soils, aquatics, wildlife, forestry and environmental issues. The county team with the highest cumulative total wins their local competition and advances to the Maryland Envirothon, scheduled for June 17-19 at the Harford Glen Environmental Education Center in Harford County.

The winner of the Maryland Envirothon represents the state at the 2008 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 Flagstaff, Arizona.

For a complete list of county Envirothon competition dates and locations, visit the MASCD's web site www.mascd.net/envirothon/news_2008Co_Events.htm.

Envirothon is sponsored by soil conservation districts, the State Soil Conservation Committee and MASCD.

ROYDEN POWELL

(Continued from page 1)

Last but not least, we are putting the finishing touches on the 2008-09 Cover Crop Program. Thanks to the passage of the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund, this fall we will virtually double the amount of cover crop funds available to farmers. Our \$18 million cover crop budget will enable us to reach more farmers, provide more options, and offer increased incentives of up to \$65 an acre for farmers in priority watersheds who plant early and follow certain environmental guidelines.

Looking back, it's been a busy and extraordinarily productive spring for MDA. The significance and value of Maryland's Conservation partnership has risen to new heights. Our hope is that our two greatest resources—farmers and the Chesapeake Bay—will continue to benefit from our hard work and dedication.

INTERNET

UNIQUE MD AG EXCHANGE NETWORK CREATED

Maryland farmers may now take advantage of a new, free online marketplace that can help them buy, sell, give away or trade their agricultural products.

The Maryland Agricultural Exchange, created by the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland, will help farmers in Maryland and throughout the Chesapeake Bay region exchange products such as manure, compost, hay, fodder crops, fruits and vegetables, organics, equipment, livestock, and much more.

The new agriculture products exchange website, which is located at <http://www.agtrader.org/>, is the first of its kind in Maryland and quite possibly, may be unique to the nation.

"This website will create new market opportunities for farmers. It is like a 'Craig's List' for agriculture," said Joanne Throwe, assistant director of the Environmental Finance Center, which is part of the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education. "AgTrader also will help farmers transport manure from those who have it to those who need it."

Roger Richardson, Maryland's Secretary of Agriculture and a lifelong farmer from Worcester County, said, "This new website ties well with the O'Malley-Brown Administration's commitment to supporting agriculture and profitable farming. The AgTrader site is a novel idea with potential to help farmers keep costs down and complement our manure matching service as well as our "Maryland's Best" agricultural products website."

All trades through the website are made strictly between buyer and seller. The website allows traders to quickly register and then post their products anytime they wish without having to fill out forms. Pricing and delivery are left up to buyer and seller to work out.

"There are plenty of valuable resources on our farms such as chicken litter, organic material, produce, and hay, to name just a few," Ms. Throwe said. "Why not build a marketplace that will assist farmers with an easy way to reach people who want their products? In addition, this kind of exchange is good for the environment and may help out the smaller farms in throughout the Chesapeake Bay region."

The website is intended to complement state-run manure transport programs and provide a free, user-friendly marketplace where farmers and other interested parties can buy and sell agricultural products and services. Added features of the site include a directory for businesses and a resource section showing a calendar of events and important news for the Chesapeake Bay agriculture community. Agtrader.org is a secured website that will be monitored and maintained by the Environmental Finance Center staff. All information is kept private. For more information, contact Joanne Throwe at jthrowe@umd.edu or 301-405-5036.

TRAINING

FUNDAMENTALS OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSE SET FOR JUNE 17 AND 18

A two-day Fundamentals of Nutrient Management Training Course will be held June 17 and 18, in the lower level conference rooms at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), 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 1. Call MDA at 410-841-5959 for a registration form or more information.

TURFGRASS TECHNICIANS TRAINING SET FOR JUNE 19

Practical Training for Turfgrass Technicians will be offered June 19, at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis. The workshop, a joint effort between MDA and Maryland Cooperative Extension, is designed for entry level employees who work for lawn care companies. It provides information on taking a soil sample, understanding a fertilizer label, measuring a lawn, interpreting soil test results and calibrating a spreader. This class will be offered in English only with a Spanish offering scheduled for July 25. Call MDA at 410-841-5959 for a registration form or more information.

NRCS TO HOLD A POLLINATOR'S DAY CELEBRATION ON JUNE 26

Spend a morning in June to learn "the buzz about plants and their pollinators" during a Pollinator Field Day event on Thursday, June 26 at the NRCS National Plant Materials Center in Beltsville. The field day will focus on the significance of the work of the Plant Materials Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to utilize conservation plantings to enhance pollinator habitats on farmland, roadsides and backyards

The Pollinator Day is planned as part of week-long celebrations held across the Nation to recognize June 22-28, 2008 as the 2nd National Pollinator Week. The event at the National PMC will include speakers, a field tour to highlight pollinator-related studies and activities and exhibits, networking and refreshments. Activities begin at 9 am and run until Noon.

AGLEARN GOES FAR BEYOND MANDATORY TRAINING

USDA's AgLearn is not only critical in providing mandatory training, it also provides access to thousands of courses of instruction as well as training records management services including your learning history, Individual Development Plan (IDP), skill assessments, and much more. Recently, SkillSoft licenses were obtained that provides access to over 3,000 courses.

Log on today and test drive the new streamlined catalog. AgLearn has made it easy to search for the right course for you. <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/>.

EVENTS

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 15-17, WISP

The 2008 MASCD Annual Meeting will be held at the Wisp Resort, McHenry on July 15-17. The Opening Session starts off the meeting at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 15, prior to the first board meeting. The theme for the meeting is "The Changing Climate for Soil Conservation" and will include discussion on climate change and the opportunities it may provide for natural resource conservation. An update from the Partnership Agencies will be provided at the Opening Session.

The Endowment Committee will be holding an auction again this year so each district (and any other agency or volunteers) are asked to provide an auction item(s). Elmer Weibley (Washington Co. SCD) is organizing the auction and will be providing more details later. We have a professional auctioneer lined up ready to maximize income for our MASCD Environmental Education Endowment Fund. Remember, last year with your help, we raised \$6,266. Our goal for 2008 is \$9,500. Topics on the agenda will include CAFO/MAFO status, urban sediment and erosion control issues, the 2007 Farm Bill outcome and status reports on staffing and funding for conservation programs.

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

The Western Area has organized a couple of events for Tuesday after the formal meetings - one is a ride up the ski lift to the top of the mountain and back (\$6.50) for a view of the surrounding area, a nice downhill stroll, or white water rafting. We have organized a 2-hr white water rafting session which will start at 4:30 and go until the last boat finishes their session. A group rate has been provided (\$60.50) for the rafting.

Information on the meeting was sent to district offices on May 14th and can be viewed on the website: www.mascd.net.

RENOVATION RIDE

Five days - 258 miles - Two teams - One cause

In an effort to rally support for the 509 Capitol Court Campaign, members of the NACD staff will hit the road pedaling in July 2008. They will bike 258 miles in five days, July 14-18. The ride will begin in Ohiopyle, PA, and end in Washington D.C. on the Friday of the 2008 NACD Joint Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference.

Check out the Renovation Ride Blog to keep up-to-speed with training news from the riders, weekly polls and fundraising updates. Be sure to check back regularly for the latest news! <http://renovationride.blogspot.com/>. More information on the event can be found at <http://www.nacdnet.org/events/509campaign/ride/>.

2008 NACD LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, JULY 18-23 WASHINGTON, D.C.—MASCD VISITS—JULY 22

NACD's 2008 Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference offers action-packed days are sure to challenge you to think and wear you out! Highlights include:

- Receive updates from key Administration leaders and Agency heads on hot topics such as climate change, Farm Bill, appropriations and renewable energy
- Participate in open discussion with key House and Senate staffers
- Attend 2nd Annual NACD Congressional Reception
- Be a part of Smithsonian's "Dig it: Secrets of Soil" Exhibit grand opening and enjoy a private tour of the exhibit
- Represent your state in meetings with members of Congress

MASCD will make Congressional visits on July 22nd. Check the NACD website at www.nacdnet.org, for registration details and a full agenda.

MARYLAND COMMODITY CLASSIC, JULY 24

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) and the Maryland Soybean Board (MSB) will host the Maryland Commodity Classic on Thursday, July 24, at the Queen Anne's 4-H Park in Centreville. Morning tours at the Wye Research and Education Center will highlight soybean and grain check off-funded research projects. Grant projects will also be on display at the 4-H Park.

The afternoon business meeting and program features Mark Pearson, host of Market to Market, the PBS production covering issues ranging from global trade conflicts to environmental controversies, and changing technologies to emerging enterprises, that challenge rural America. The event will close with the famed Crab Feast, Pork and Chicken Barbecue. Event sponsorships are now being accepted. For more information, contact the MGPA office at 410-956-5771.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY'S 2008 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, JULY 26-30

The 2008 Annual Conference will be held July 26-30 in Tucson, Arizona. The Preliminary Program is now available and includes complete descriptions of conference plenary sessions, the list of oral and poster presentations and symposia, tours, workshops, and special events. To download the program, go to <http://www.swcs.org/documents/08Prelim.pdf>.

Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization founded in 1943 that serves as an advocate for conservation professionals and for science-based conservation practice, programs, and policy. SWCS has over 5,000 members around the world. They include researchers, administrators, planners, policymakers, technical advisors, teachers, students, farmers, and ranchers. Members come from nearly every academic discipline and many different public, private, and nonprofit institutions.

CIVIL RIGHTS**ASIAN/PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH, 2008**

May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month—a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. A rather broad term, Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

Like most commemorative months, Asian/Pacific Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill. In June 1977, Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California introduced a House resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian/Pacific Heritage Week. The following month, senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Both were passed. On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration. Twelve years later, President George H.W. Bush signed an extension making the week-long celebration into a month-long celebration. In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month was signed into law.

The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America
Americans who trace their ancestry to Asia and the Pacific Islands have contributed much to our Nation. During Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, we highlight their importance to our great Nation.

Asian/Pacific Americans have made our country better with their talents and hard work. Their values and commitment to family and community have helped shape and strengthen America. These citizens speak many languages, honor countless traditions, and practice different faiths, but they are bound by a shared commitment to freedom and liberty. The diversity among Asian/Pacific Americans adds to the cultural fabric of our society.

Asian/Pacific Americans have enriched our culture, excelling in many fields, including education, business, science, technology, government, sports, and the arts. We especially honor those Asian/Pacific Americans who have answered the call to protect the cause of freedom by serving in our Armed Forces. These brave men and women set a powerful example for all Americans.

As we celebrate Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, we are reminded of the richness of the Asian and Pacific cultures. Asian/Pacific Americans enhance the American experience and contribute to our country's legacy of diversity.

To honor the achievements and contributions of Asian/Pacific Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 102-450, as amended, has designated the month of May each year as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2008 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. I call upon the people of the United States to learn more about the history of Asian/Pacific Americans and their many contributions to our Nation and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

GEORGE W. BUSH

ITEMS OF INTEREST**CALL FOR PROPOSALS: GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR RURAL NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The 2008-09 Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), administered by the Rural Maryland Council, is accepting grant applications through July 7, 2008 from rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges.

Applicants must be a 501(c)3 nonprofit that serves a regional or statewide rural constituency and undertakes projects related to statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, or agricultural and forestry education. Rural community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses through enhanced training and technical assistance are also eligible.

Eligible projects must serve more than one rural county, and preference is given to those organizations which have secured equal matching funds from non-state sources. The grant period runs from September 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

Maryland has designated the following counties as rural: Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico and Worcester.

Complete details and application materials are available on the Rural Maryland Council website at www.rural.state.md.us or call 410-841-5772.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

USDA SECRETARY SCHAFER JOINS MARYLAND CONSERVATION LEADERS TO CELEBRATE EARTH DAY WITH \$2.6 MILLION TO PROTECT MARYLAND FARMLAND

On April 22, 2008, conservation partners gathered on a farm field in Reisterstown, in Baltimore County to celebrate Earth Day and the preservation of Maryland farmland. USDA Secretary Schafer, NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, landowners Glenn and Ruth Elseroad, Maryland Agriculture Secretary Roger Richardson, Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith, and NRCS Maryland State Conservationist Jon Hall, spoke during the program which announced the funding to protect hundreds of acres of Maryland farmland from development. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer announced that Maryland will receive \$2.6 million in Fiscal Year 2008 to protect agricultural land through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Funding will be distributed to the Baltimore County Agricultural Land Preservation Program and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

The two agreements will protect 622 acres of farmland. Baltimore County's \$1.6 million will protect 341 acres on five farms. The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy agreement covers 281 acres on a family farm in Talbot County, the second phase of this agricultural land preservation project.

USDA-NRCS in Maryland has worked with 15 cooperating entities to protect about 35,000 acres on 257 farms through FRPP since its inception. Maryland has used more than \$31 million in FRPP funds since 1996.

FRPP has protected about 533,000 acres on 2,764 farms and ranches nationwide from 1996-2007. In that time, USDA-NRCS has invested \$536 million into FRPP across the country, working with 348 cooperating entities.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION



Conservationists gathered recently at the picturesque and historic Elseroad Family farm in Maryland to celebrate Earth Day and recognize a new Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) easement partnership between the Elseroad Family and Baltimore County, Maryland. NACD CEO Krysta Harden joined Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer, USDA Undersecretary Gary Mast, NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster and many other state and local conservation leaders at the event. Harden is pictured with Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts President Lee McDaniel (left) and Maryland NRCS State Conservationist Jon Hall (right).

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT JAN-MAR

Inspection & Enforcement Activities

Certification and licensing inspections were conducted on 67 operations. Overall quality of written NM plans is high; the focus now is on helping consultants and operators make improvements in the area of record keeping.

Implementation specialists conducted 120 inspections and found 79 to be in compliance with NM regulations. Forty-one non-compliant operators received warning letters, MDA issued one charge letter, and one operator was fined for failure to adequately correct previously noted deficiencies. Inspectors most often cited operators for failure to have a current NM plan and complete yield records.

Enforcement efforts also increased for non-agricultural land management, e.g., golf courses and landscape maintenance companies. From January - March 2008 three golf courses and 10 lawn care companies were inspected. Of those, four of the lawn care companies were found to be non-compliant and were issued warning letters, the first step in the enforcement process that could ultimately lead to fines.

As of April 17, 70% of the 5903 eligible agricultural operators had submitted annual implementation reports (AIRs) for 2007. The remaining 1741 operators were issued warning letters that outlined the reasons for their failure to comply with nutrient management regulations and advised them of steps to take to correct the deficiencies or to be subject to fines. Operations using animal manure as part of their fertility program are currently the focus of inspection, some 80% of overall planned activities.

Education & Training

Twenty-seven educational programs served over 350 participants, many of whom sought continuing education credits required to maintain certification as a consultant, farmer/operator or nutrient applicator. Eight people received specialized training and certification to develop nutrient management plans for their nursery and greenhouse operations. Training sessions were conducted throughout the state with the assistance of university, industry and government partners.

SINE DIE REPORT *CONT'D*

Cost-Share Funding: The capital budget includes \$1.8 million for the MACS program, down from the \$3 million request. Despite the \$1.2 M cut, MDA expects to be able to fund the MACS program with the available balances from prior years and hopefully some additional funds from the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund.

Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund: The Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund (SB 213/HB 369) legislation was amended to address the concerns raised by MASCD and \$25m was allotted to the program for FY09. The full \$50m is expected for FY10. Although nothing has been specified, I expect much of the FY09 funds will be used for cover crops at an increased rate to compensate for increased commodity prices. The law now allows the funds to be allocated for MACS and allows additional staffing for the districts both as state employees working for MDA or through grants directly to the scds, a group of scds or even through MASCD on behalf of the scds. Multiyear contracts are encouraged. No specific allocation has been made for agriculture but the law does state that agriculture is a priority. The Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources to be added to the BayStat subcommittee and the language preventing the use of the funding for regulated activities has been amended so that the funds cannot be used for someone who is out of compliance but can be used by individuals who are regulated – such as those farmers who may become CAFO's or MAFO's to bring them into compliance.

Nutrient Management Law: A bill introduced late in the session, apparently at the request of Attorney General Doug Gansler, to eliminate the language in the Water Quality Improvement Law that requires the annual summary report provided to MDA to be kept confidential was never passed out of the Rules Committee (an additional step in the legislative process required when bills are filed late).

Bay Restoration Funds: For the second year, a bill flipping the percentage of the septic fee that goes for cover crops (from 40 to 60%) and septic upgrades (from 60 to 40%) was introduced but did not pass. MASCD supported the bill. Efforts to allow Bay Restoration funds to be used to allow septic users in communities with failing systems to install group nitrogen removal systems did pass (SB 831/HB 581).

Critical Area Law: Amendments to the Critical Area Law (HB 1253/SB 844) passed. When land in resource conservation areas is subdivided in the future, a 200 foot buffer will be required. No changes were made to the requirements for agriculture in the critical area but as the regulations are developed, scds need to make sure to keep an eye on them.

Ag Land Transfer Tax: SB 662 passed which increases the agricultural land transfer tax with a 25% surcharge to be used to fund the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program to help young farmers acquire their first farms and preserve additional acres of farmland and allows MALPF the flexibility to make additional farmland protection easement purchases with installment purchase agreements.

Estate Taxes: Several bills were introduced that reduced or eliminated the state estate taxes on agricultural land. Some raised the limit for everyone and others were specific to agricultural land values with one only for land in the ag land preservation program. MASCD supported all these bills but none passed.

Tax Incentives for Agriculture: The estate tax reduction was also part of SB 434/HB 898 which was the outcome of the Incentives for Agriculture Committee report which reviewed all tax issues impacting agriculture. The bill also provided biofuels incentives.

Biofuels: The Biofuels Committee established last year as a result of SB 261 recommended several changes to support biofuels production and use. Of the four bills (SB 342/SB 343/SB474 and SB 565), SB 565 providing an incentive to use B5 in home heating oil was the only bill that passed. It has a 3-year sunset.

Dairy Industry: Addressing the concerns of the dairy industry, a bill to establish a Dairy Farmer Emergency Trust Fund passed but without the provision for a \$5m fund allocation. Bills to address selling milk below cost did not pass. HB 1624 expands the Farmstead Cheese Production pilot program to up to five milk processor-farmstead cheese producer permits under the pilot program.

Poultry Litter: Poultry litter is now classified as a Tier 1 product when it comes to “green energy” within certain parameters (SB 348/HB 1166).

Sunday Hunting: Bills to allow or extend Sunday hunting for Harford, Montgomery and Washington Counties were all passed. The ban on children under 13 years of age hunting was withdrawn.

Odds and Ends: Legislation honoring Jane Lawton (a former Montgomery delegate who died suddenly at the end of 2007) establishing a “Farm-To-School Program” at the Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to promote state agriculture and farm products to children, through school meal and classroom programs. SB 909 adds a young farmer to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Board of Trustees. A Task Force was formed to study the statewide gypsy moth infestation and to make recommendations regarding the most effective practical, regulatory, and legislative means of combating the infestation. Garrett County's legislation (SB 260/HB 314) to provide for agricultural districts for ag land preservation passed as well as Prince George's County's efforts to make changes to their ag land preservation program. Bills to deal with the spreading of sewage sludge in state parks all failed (SB 261/SB 262/HB 466/HB 434). Bills to address the phosphorus level of lawn fertilizer failed as did the bill to impose a 10% fee on commercial lawn care applications.

Future Dates to Remember

June 20	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
June 17-19	2008 State Envirothon, Harford Glen Environmental Education Center, Harford Co.
June 17-18	Nutrient Management Training
June 19	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
July 14-18	NACD Renovation Ride
July 15-17	MASCD Annual Meeting, Wisp
July 16	SSCC Meeting, Wisp
July 18-23	NACD Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
July 22	Maryland Congressional Visits as part of the NACD Legislative Conference in DC
July 26-30	Soil and Water Conservation Society's Annual Conference, Arizona
July 24	Maryland Commodity Classic, Centreville
July 28-Aug 3	2008 Canon International Envirothon, AZ
Aug 1	Nutrient Management & MACCA Exams

PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



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 410-956-5771.

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
53 Slama Road
Edgewater, MD 21037-1423
410-956-5771
www.mascd.net

BULK PERMIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDGEWATER, MD
PERMIT NO. 41