

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts



Policy Book

2008

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NOTE:

Resolutions are grouped according to the natural resource or conservation subject involved. If a specific subject is not involved, the resolution is listed under the agency or other group involved.

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

POLICY BOOK

Agricultural Land Preservation

1. MASCD supports the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program.
2. MASCD strongly supports use of program open space funding for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program. (Amended July 94)
3. MASCD discourages the placing of dredge spoil on prime agricultural land. (July 98)

Biofuels

1. MASCD supports the construction of a small grains ethanol plant in Maryland, which will promote the use of cover crops, enhance rural development and decrease our dependence on foreign oil. (Jan 02)
2. MASCD strongly supports legislation for tax incentives and credits to encourage production and use of ethanol. (July 04)
3. MASCD supports the development of a biofuels facility (ies) in Maryland. (Jan 06)

District Operations

1. MASCD encourages and supports the concept of MDA and NRCS annually holding a joint plan of work meeting within each District.
2. MASCD encourages the development of a reporting system that realistically reflects the accomplishments of Districts in comparable parameters.
3. MASCD re-emphasizes and urges all districts to solicit operating funds from any appropriate source: federal, state and local agencies, etc. Such arrangements can readily be accomplished by Memorandums of Understanding.
4. MASCD considers it imperative that federal, state and local governments appropriately fund the activities and responsibilities of Soil Conservation Districts throughout the state of Maryland.
5. MASCD should seek to obtain the necessary funds to aid the Soil Conservation Districts to update their long-range plan of work.
6. MASCD encourages Districts, where appropriate, to participate in county administrative committees for service centers.
7. MASCD recommends that Soil Conservation Districts publish a newsletter periodically.
8. Recognizing that all supervisors should receive the brief training on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), MASCD requests that the Maryland SSCC inform all supervisors of their responsibilities under the ADA and provide follow-up training in each region of the state for all supervisors. (July 94)

9. MASCD supports the development of a model MOU to coordinate the activities of the Soil Conservation Districts, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of the Environment. (Jan 95)
10. MASCD recommends that Districts in Maryland strive for statewide consistency in reporting all of their conservation efforts on a comparable basis. (Jan 96)
11. MASCD supports equity in program delivery. (July 96)
12. MASCD recommends elimination of the 50 mile radius restriction on staying over night to encourage better attendance at state wide meetings of SCD supervisors. (July 97)
13. MASCD requests that the Governor and Secretary of Budget and Management support the Annual Salary Review (ASR) for soil conservation district employees. A letter should be sent to the Governor and Secretary of DBM. (Jan 07)
14. MASCD should investigate options for developing statewide ID cards for district personnel. (Jan 07)

Drainage

1. MASCD recommends that all drainage projects born of Public Law 566 be given strong consideration and support by local, state and federal governments.
2. MASCD supports the use of State funding for drainage maintenance.
3. MASCD urges NACD to establish a drainage committee charged with the goals to demonstrate the environmental advantages of drainage; share new developments in drainage research; improve methods of drainage management and drainage maintenance; revise and update NACD's policy statement on drainage; and organize forums to help districts better deal with drainage.
4. MASCD resolves to work with the counties and MDA to encourage DNR to pay maintenance fees on property accessed under PDA's and PWA's. (Jan 02)
5. MASCD strongly supports sending a letter to MDE in support of MDA's position on MDE's new proposed Water Quality Regulations. (July 05)

Environmental Education

1. MASCD supports sending a team from Maryland to compete in the National Envirothon each year. (Amended Jan 01)
2. MASCD will develop a strategy to insure that the long range viability of the MASCD Education position be strengthened and maintained. (Jan 04)
3. The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) recognizes the significant contributions Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has made to the Maryland Envirothon program over the past 17 years. Therefore, the MASCD request that Maryland DNR continue to support the Maryland Envirothon by providing resource personnel to assist with the aquatics, forestry and wildlife resources areas. (Jan 08)

4. The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) requests that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provide technical and soil scientist staff resources to support the Maryland Envirothon. (Jan 08)

Erosion and Sediment Control

1. MASCD supports Districts retaining the sediment control review responsibilities delegated to them under present state statutes and will actively and vigorously oppose any legislation to change state law to reduce District responsibilities either individually or collectively. (Reaffirmed Jan 94)
2. MASCD supports Anne Arundel Districts efforts to follow the law and review state projects taking place in the Severn River Watershed.
3. MASCD encourages the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Soil Conservation Districts to continue to work together to ensure that erosion and sediment control programs are administered effectively.
4. MASCD supports continuing a voluntary sediment control program for agriculture.
5. MASCD supports a change to the sediment control law to allow, but not require, Districts performing voluntary inspections for the Department of the Environment to charge reasonable fees for said inspector services. (July 00)
6. In recognition and consideration of further information regarding the matter of a three (3) year life, specifically for Forest Harvest Erosion and Sediment Control Plans, the MASCD resolves to no longer support the unique time period as necessary on a statewide basis: and be it resolved to immediately make this position known to the Maryland Departments of the Environment and Natural Resources, and also to the State Soil Conservation Committee. (Jan 04)
7. MASCD supports the development of a certification process for SCD staff that review and approve Erosion and Sediment Control plans. (Jan 08)
8. MASCD urges MDE to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the Erosion & Sediment Control Program in the state. We urge MDE to update the 1994 Erosion & Sediment control specs and Forest Harvest standards, and evaluate the effectiveness of enforcement activities. MASCD will research funding to assist with the manual revisions such that the revisions will be complete within 18 months. (Jan 08)
9. MASCD supports the development of an on-going training and certification program for erosion and sediment control for District employees. (July 08)
10. MASCD supports MDE's concept of requiring the submission of a stormwater management and an erosion and sediment control "concept plan" to the local SCD and other local authorities as may be appropriate for review. (July 08)

Federal Issues

1. MASCD supports that regulatory authority and control of pesticides be promulgated at the national level. (Jan 92)

2. MASCD urges the USDA, Secretary of Agriculture to appoint a Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service who is technically qualified to direct a highly skilled professional organization with demonstrated leadership qualities based on a full exposure to agriculture and agribusiness with a thorough knowledge of the relationship between Federal, State and Local programs.
3. MASCD supports Federal funding for the USDA agencies charged with the conservation of soil and water resources.
4. MASCD strongly encourages the US Secretary of Agriculture to request appropriations for adequate staff and office space for FSA to administer each program for which the FSA is responsible. (July 00)
5. MASCD opposes the Corp of Engineers' re-interpretation of regulatory authority under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act over and including certain drainage ways known and defined as: (1) intermittent streams, (2) ephemeral streams, and (3) drainage ditches; wherein said drainage ways are not subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, not used for interstate or foreign commerce, are without natural fluctuations of water, and are without a shore (line); all as set forth in the referenced Clean Water Act and Rivers Harbors Act. Due to a complete lack of definitive standards and criteria the Association and its members Districts are unable to recognize the regulatory authority of the Corp of Engineers over the aforesaid drainage ways. (July 00)
6. MASCD strongly supports NRCS to push to have a Toolkit Arc View Planning Program that is practical and efficient in developing Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans. (July 05)
7. MASCD requests that NRCS provides additional engineering support to districts, including filling existing vacancies of engineering positions, to help the increasing ag and urban workload. (Jan 07)
8. MASCD urges NRCS to:
 1. Recognize the importance of the districts continued inclusion in the restructuring process.
 2. Recognize the importance of locally lead conservation.
 3. Provide for clarification for the timeline for implementation.
 4. Clearly illustrate the budget savings and the methodology used to support the restructuring conclusions ensuring that the current level of conservation delivery is protected and/or enhanced. (Jan 07)
9. MASCD opposes any federal farm bill proposal that provides funding for technical service Providers (TSP) rather than boosting NRCS staff funding for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). (Jan 07)

Federal Conservation Programs

1. MASCD will work with state and federal legislators to maintain the Conservation Reserve Program as incorporated in the 1996 Farm Bill. (Amended Jan 97)
2. MASCD supports the use of herbaceous buffers as an alternative to forested buffers in marginal pastureland in the CREP program. (July 98)
3. MASCD supports NRCS documentation of the success of PL566 projects in Maryland and distribution of information to districts and the general public to ensure future support.

4. MASCD resolves to provide a representative for each area to sit on Maryland's CREP Advisory and Technical Committee. (Jan 02)
5. MASCD supports a well balanced Farm Bill that involves both environmental and commodity programs. (Jan 06)
6. MASCD supports the use of vertical tillage such as no-till rippers and turbo-tills as an eligible practice under continuous no-till provisions of the Conservation Security Program. (Jan 06)
7. MASCD resolves that NRCS and the state Technical Committee utilize inputs from local workgroups to develop the EQIP program annually. (July 06)
8. MASCD recommends that one of the parameters for evaluating the Conservation Delivery System be that NRCS place a District Conservationist in every SCD office in the State of Maryland. (July 06)
9. MASCD requests that NRCS and MDA convene a task force along with representatives from SCD's to evaluate how EQIP and MACS can be better tailored to meet the conservation needs of farm operations with low animal unit numbers for cost sharing needed BMP's and make recommendations to the MACS and EQIP programs. (July 07)
10. MASCD urges FSA Management at National Headquarters to reach an immediate decision on the pending Maryland CREP agreement proposal. (July 08)

Forestry

1. MASCD supports the Maryland Tree Farm Program.
2. MASCD recommends that the Maryland Department of Agriculture Division of Gypsy Moth Control survey farm wood lots for infestation at the request of landowners. If the area meets criteria as set by the MDA for Gypsy Moth Control then these wood lots should be sprayed.
3. MASCD requests that DNR change their policy on timber harvesting on state land to allow for the rapid and effective harvest of trees in response to catastrophic events such as Gypsy Moth defoliation. (July 00)
4. MASCD supports a change in law or regulation that supports the combined use of the CREP and Forest Conservation Act programs to benefit and encourage greater participation in the CREP program. (Jan 01)
5. MASCD supports current Federal and State timber harvest management practices on their respective lands in Maryland. (Jan 01)

Land Use

1. MASCD opposes any degree of statewide zoning.

Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program

1. MASCD urges the Maryland General Assembly to support continued funding of the agricultural initiatives including the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program because of the great benefits the installation of BMP's has in improving water quality for the general public.

2. MASCD supports a Cover Crop BMP to be cost-shared. Recent research has shown this to be an effective tool in controlling nutrient loading into water sources and in controlling erosion.
3. MASCD supports the use of general funds by the Maryland Department of Agriculture for funding short-term practices through the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program. (Amended July 94)
4. MASCD supports the inclusion of NRCS code 560, Farm Access Road Best Management Practice, in the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program. (Jan 97)
5. MASCD supports funding for future Cover Crop Programs be provided for all areas of Maryland, and that the amount of money per acre be adequate to cover the cost of seed regardless of the final use of the crop to encourage more participation, and that planting deadlines for the program be decided by each Soil Conservation District Board in consultation with MDA. (July 98)
6. MASCD supports revising the standards to include cost-share assistance from MACS for crossings where it is necessary to cross waterways. (July 98)
7. MASCD supports the requirement that a critical condition must exist to be eligible for Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share BMP, Heavy Use Area Protection.
8. MASCD request that the animal unit number requirement be changed from 15 to 8 animal units to be consistent with the nutrient management requirement addressed in the 1998 Water Quality Improvement Act. (Jan 99)
9. MASCD recommends that the repair of sinkholes on agricultural land become a Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share practice to enhance water quality in the state of Maryland. (July 99)
10. MASCD requests MDA and NRCS work with local Districts to amend cover crop seeding rates to better reflect the establishment of adequate cover. (July 00)
11. MASCD urges the Maryland Cost Share Cover Crop Technical Committee to consider approval for payment if the practice was approved by district staff. (Jan 04)
12. MASCD urges the Maryland Cost Share Cover Crop Technical Committee to consider being more flexible with planting rates when germination rates are seasonally lower. (Jan 04)
13. MASCD encourages the cost-share program for cover crops to be adapted to allow for the harvesting for grain. (Jan 05)
14. MASCD supports the MDA bill to amend Article 8-705 to permit a modification to the current Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program Agreement between MDA and the applicant. (Jan 05)
15. MASCD requests that MDA seek immediate remedies to increase the MACS funding caps for the following Ag Waste Storage (dollars per cubic foot limit), the \$25.00 per ton cost effectiveness limit, the per farm limit, and the per project limit. (July 05)
16. MASCD supports the broadening of the Cover Crop Program to include commodity cover crops so there is no predetermined limit on that portion of the program. (Jan 06)
17. MASCD urges MDA, district staff, and the state technical committee to work together to review and simplify the MACS Cover Crop Program. (Jan 07)

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

1. MASCD requests the Department of Agriculture to take action to raise salaries of its field employees to reflect the level of responsibilities and experience required of their positions.
2. MASCD supports maintaining a separate Maryland Department of Agriculture with a cabinet level Secretary of Agriculture reporting directly to the Governor. (Amended Jan 94)
3. MASCD recommends that MDA a policy regarding the Manure Transport Pilot Project be changed so that records are handled by the Districts in which the manure is applied. (Jan 01)
4. MASCD supports a review of MDA Technician job descriptions and salary grades. (Jan 01)
5. MASCD strongly supports vacant MDA positions to be filled in conservation district field offices. (July 04)
6. MASCD recommends that MDA actively pursue an exception to the present hiring freeze and re-classification policy to facilitate upgrades to fill vacant positions so to retain and reward experienced staff. (Jan 05)
7. MASCD supports the concept of MDA having the authority to hire and employ the staff that have agriculture and farming backgrounds and experience and has an active ownership/financial interest in a farming operation. (Jan 06)
8. MASCD recommends that MDA explore the feasibility of establishing a soil testing laboratory at MDA headquarters in Annapolis, to serve Maryland citizens. (Jan 06)
9. MASCD encourages MDA to pursue re-instituting cost-share funding to support the MACS Program Nutrient Management Cost-Share on a Continuous Basis. (July 07)
10. MASCD requests that MDE and MDA include SCD representation on the Steering Committee developing State policy on non-point source nutrient trading and carbon trading and defining the proper leadership role of the District. (July 07)
11. MASCD recommends that the Maryland Department of Agriculture Division of Gypsy Moth Control survey farm wood lots for infestation at the request of landowners. If the area meets criteria as set by the MDA for Gypsy Moth Control then these wood lots should be sprayed. (Reaffirmed Jan 08)

Maryland Department of the Environment

1. MASCD resolves that MDE and counties revisit the stormwater management requirements for natural conservation areas to include specific agricultural uses. (July 06)
2. MASCD is fully committed to assisting MDE with implementing the Stormwater Management Act 2007. MASCD specifically commits to helping MDE with the update of Chapter 5, development of the model ordinance and assisting with implementation at the local level. (Jan 08)

Mining Operations

1. MASCD supports the ongoing study of stream pollution from strip mine operations and legislation or regulation changes to correct any weaknesses in the existing state laws and regulations.

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Nutrient Management

1. MASCD encourages the State of Maryland to fully explore all alternatives for use of the organic resources available in poultry manure before resorting to burning it as a fuel source at the Eastern Correctional Institution (ECI). MASCD encourages an economic analysis of any impacts to the forestry industry, which currently supplies wood chips to the ECI power plant, if poultry manure is used as a fuel source. (July 98)
2. MASCD supports having the year-end nutrient management summary submitted on a “per farm” basis rather than on a “per field” basis. (Jan 04)
3. MASCD strongly recommends the re-opening of the University of Maryland soil testing lab that performs soil and manure tests. (July 05)

Recycling

1. MASCD supports the recycling of household wastes. Unfortunately, every new landfill reduces agricultural lands. Favorable support of recycling will reduce this loss.
2. MASCD supports development of legislation in the State of Maryland to develop a program to sponsor free tire recycling days at least annually in each county in the state. (Jan 01)

Rivers and Streams

1. MASCD supports an effort to reclassify Class III trout streams that sustain no native trout population to the appropriate stream classification.
2. MASCD supports legislation to waive the public notice and hearing requirement for stream crossings if the minimum design standards are met.
3. MASCD opposes the National Wild and Scenic River Study of the Patuxent River due to the uncertainty the program would have on the permitting and/or activities within the Patuxent Watershed. (July 04)

Shoreline and Streambank Erosion

1. MASCD supports legislation that would involve the Districts in the control of shoreline and streambank erosion.

Small Ponds

1. MASCD urges the Maryland Department of the Environment to institute a procedure of performing preliminary reviews of small ponds by personnel who have authority to make decisions before too much time and effort has been invested.
2. MASCD requests the SSCC to continue work in resolving the Districts problems associated with delays in the approval process for small pond construction. (Amended July 94)
3. MASCD urges the State of Maryland to perform adequate before and after water temperature monitoring during the review of the effects of farm ponds and bypass ponds to enable correct scientific conclusions to be determined.

Soil and Soil Survey

1. MASCD supports the updating of Maryland's soil surveys and recommends that NRCS work with MDA, MASCD, MCE, DNR, and MDE to seek additional resources for the updating of soil surveys.
2. MASCD supports the adoption of "The Sassafras Soil Series" as Maryland's state soil, as included in the Governor's proclamation for the "Dig It" Smithsonian Exhibit. (Amended July 08)

State and Public Lands

1. MASCD urges the state and federal governments to ensure that all publicly owned lands have a fully implemented Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan. (July 92)

State Soil Conservation Committee

1. MASCD believes that the Soil Conservation Districts Handbook is a great benefit to supervisors and requests that SSCC update this handbook.
2. MASCD supports the State Soil Conservation Committee as it continues to lead and direct district programs.
3. MASCD recommends to the State Soil Conservation Committee that per diem allowances to supervisors be increased to \$100.00 per day. (Jan 04)
4. MASCD requests to have state per diem provided to supervisors for attending out-of-state Conservation District Meetings. (July 04)

Taxes

1. MASCD supports the concept of a state tax credit for no-till equipment purchases to encourage farmers to adopt no-tillage methods.
2. MASCD supports the valuation of agricultural land by its use value and forestland value rather than its fair market value for estate tax purposes.
3. MASCD supports a Maryland tax subtraction modification for no-till rippers, which do not invert the soil profile, and are used to address compaction in high residue cropping systems. (Jan 02)
4. MASCD supports a Maryland tax subtraction modification for the purchase of global positioning system devices for agricultural applications in accordance with a nutrient management plan. (Jan 02)
5. MASCD supports any action by the Maryland legislature to remove or minimize the effect of the Maryland Estate Tax on the estates of Maryland farmers and property owners. (Jan 06)
6. MASCD supports the addition of vertical tillage equipment to the list of equipment eligible for Maryland's conservation tillage equipment for Income Tax Subtraction Modification. (Jan 07)
7. MASCD supports adding equipment that directly injects nitrogen into the soil profile for the purpose of side dressing nutrients to the Maryland Income Tax subtraction list. (July 07)

8. MASCD requests that MDA pursue a Maryland tax subtraction modification for the purchase of precision application technology for use on orchards as they use more insecticides and fungicides than traditional crops and this precision spray system allows for treatment of pests specifically on areas that have been located and identified using approved sensing systems, greatly reducing unnecessary chemicals from being used. (July 07)

Trading

1. MASCD fully endorses a role in Environmental Services (nutrients, carbon, wildlife benefits, etc.) Trading for Local Soil Conservation Districts. MASCD further strongly recommends that NACD fully engage in carbon trading discussion at the national level to assure that the issue of “Additionality” will have no impact on farmers who have been practicing good conservation practices, such as conservation tillage, and wish to participate in carbon trading. (July 08)

Urban Issues

1. MASCD supports funding through USDA, NRCS for staffing for urban environmental programs. Funds should be adequate for resource data collection and interpretation; sediment and erosion control program planning; storm water management planning and environmental enhancement. MASCD urges the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service to give equitable credit for urban as well as agricultural reported BMP's when considering providing assistance to Districts. (Jan 93)
2. MASCD supports actions to create a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District to ensure that the whole of Maryland is covered by District activities. (Jan 93)
3. MASCD urges the State Soil Conservation Committee and the Department of Agriculture to take further responsibility in the support of urban districts in a total program sense and not just in agricultural endeavor. Also, include specific reference to urban as well as agriculture in their Memorandum of Understanding. Districts represent all of the people and need to be supported accordingly. (Jan 93)
4. MASCD supports the Governor’s legislation to impose a user’s fee for people who are connected to the public wastewater systems. (Jan 04)

Water Use

1. MASCD supports the law that requires large agricultural water users to obtain a water appropriations permit and establishes a priority water use for agriculture.
2. MASCD strongly supports the critical need for two multi-year studies to determine the hydrologic and geologic data for the proper management of the State’s water resources; one covering the confined aquifers underlying Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore and the other covering the Piedmont hardrock area of the State. MASCD will offer its support in obtaining the necessary funding and to communicate with the Governor indicating the importance of these studies to the agricultural community. (July 07)

Wetlands

1. MASCD supports the planning and implementation efforts necessary for state agencies to aggressively manage and control phragmites. (Jan 94)

Wildlife

1. MASCD strongly encourages DNR to develop a plan to bring deer population to a level to sustain the ecosystem. (Jan 05)