



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS | 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



We Go the Extra Mile Every Day for a Healthier Chesapeake Bay



2016 Year in Review

Hoot Retires, Thompson Takes Reins

MASCD welcomed Lindsay Thompson as its new executive director following the retirement of Lynne Hoot on September 30. Lynne provided 27 years of outstanding service to soil conservation districts and was honored by well wishers including MASCD presidents.



Maryland Agriculture on Track to Meet Bay Restoration Goals

Maryland farmers—with guidance and support from soil conservation districts—were on track to meet or exceed 2017 midpoint assessment goals for the Bay restoration.



Pollinator Habitat Project Bears Fruit

Through this innovative grant program, 59 acres of critical pollinator habitat have been established on 67 farms in 15 counties.



Maryland Teens Place 5th at National Competition

A five-member team of students from Carroll County placed 5th among 52 teams at the 2016 North American Envirothon competition.



Mission Statement—The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) serves as the voice for Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts on statewide issues. Our mission is to promote practical and effective soil, water, and related natural resource programs to all citizens on a voluntary basis through leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction provided by soil conservation districts.

Message from the President and Executive Director

They say that if you want to get something done, ask a busy person. Over the years, Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts have confirmed this reasoning time and time again.

Districts have assumed a leadership role in helping farmers install conservation practices on their farms to meet clean water objectives for the Chesapeake Bay known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Established in 2010, the Chesapeake Bay TMDL spans parts of six states and the District of Columbia. It requires Maryland and the other Bay jurisdictions to achieve significant reductions in the amount of nutrients and sediment entering the Bay and

its tributaries by 2025. Maryland agriculture, with the help of the state's 24 soil conservation districts, has met or exceeded its short-term cleanup objectives and is on track to meet 2017 midpoint assessment goals for the cleanup.

By all accounts, our hard work is paying off. According to the latest data released by the Chesapeake Bay Program and U.S. Geological Survey, nutrients and sediment entering the Bay dropped significantly between 2014 and 2015 due in part to the best management practices installed by Maryland farmers. While that is certainly encouraging news, our work is far from over as the

second half of the cleanup kicks into high gear.

Developing Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans to help farmers protect natural resources on their farms is a time-consuming process that often requires the talent of an entire team of soil conservation professionals. Cost-share funds are essential in helping farmers pay for best management practices included in these plans. It is our hope that state cost-share funding for highly efficient best management practices such as animal waste storage structures and stream protection practices will be available to farmers during the upcoming fiscal year.

75 Years Strong

The Allegany, Caroline, Charles, Prince George's, and Queen Anne's soil conservation districts each celebrated 75 years of helping Maryland landowners protect natural resources.

MASCD Secures \$4.5 Million Grant

In February, MASCD was awarded a \$4.5 million grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program to help farmers install best management practices.

Getting Credit Where Credit is Due

A grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation allowed districts to verify the effectiveness of 150 additional best management practices installed by farmers without the benefit of cost-share assistance. These practices will now be included in agriculture's progress toward restoring the Bay.

Farm Stewardship Program Reaches Milestone

The Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) reached a milestone in 2016 with 50,000 acres of well-managed farmland certified. This unique conservation recognition program certifies famers who have demonstrated a superior level of stewardship.



Our environmental work, however, is not limited to farmland. At construction and road building sites where sediment and nutrient runoff is a major concern, our urban planners work with builders, developers, and local planning and zoning officials to ensure that safeguards are in place to protect water quality.

The fact is, districts have been helping landowners protect natural resources longer than any other environmental group—in some instances 75 years or more. We receive funding through a combination of local, state, and federal resources. Throughout our long history, funding has been inconsistent at best.

Nevertheless, soil conservation districts are experienced in doing more with less and can be counted on to get the job done. We are meeting—and in most cases exceeding—Bay cleanup goals and look forward to the challenges ahead. To continue our success, we ask that funds for soil conservation district technical staff remain intact. On behalf of Maryland's farmers—who last year alone spent \$1.5 million of their own money to install needed best management practices—we ask that allocation of state cost-share funds continue during this critical stage in the Chesapeake Bay restoration. Please read on to learn how we go the extra mile

every day for farmers, developers, and our state's natural resources.



Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Charles Rice
President

Lindsay Thompson
Executive Director

going the extra mile...Protecting Chesapeake Bay

Soil conservation districts go the extra mile to help farmers install best management practices (BMPs) on their farms to reduce nutrient runoff, prevent soil erosion, and improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

In 2010, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of nutrients and sediment that can enter the Bay and its tributaries. The TMDL represents the maximum amount of pollution that the Bay can withstand and still meet water quality standards. The six Bay states and

the District of Columbia are required to follow Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) outlining specific actions and strategies that they will take to achieve these pollution limits by 2025. By 2017, the program's halfway point, best management practices must be installed to achieve at least 60 percent of the required pollution reduction targets.

Maryland agriculture is making tremendous strides toward protecting and restoring the Bay. Since the establishment of the TMDL, agriculture has met or exceeded all of its short-

term milestone objectives and is on track to meet 60 percent of the pollution reductions required at the program's halfway point in 2017.

Best management practices installed with public funds are reported to EPA using the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Conservation Tracker database management system. Soil conservation districts also work with farmers to verify practices installed with private funds so that they can be accounted for in the Bay Model that tracks progress.

Chesapeake Bay Restoration Progress through June 2016

MILESTONE	ANNUAL GOAL (DUE JUNE 30, 2016)	STATUS AS OF JUNE 30, 2016	PERCENT OF ANNUAL GOAL ACHIEVED
Cover Crops	Plant 417,014 acres of cover crops each year	501,204 acres planted during 2015-2016 planting season	121%
Manure Transport	Annually transport 51,000 tons of poultry litter or livestock manure to farms or alternative use facilities that can use the manure safely and in accordance with nutrient management plans	213,151 tons of manure transported in 2016	418%
MILESTONE	2017 MIDPOINT ASSESSMENT GOAL (DUE JUNE 30, 2017)	STATUS AS OF JUNE 30, 2016	PERCENT OF 2017 MIDPOINT ASSESSMENT GOAL ACHIEVED
Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans	Develop plans for 1,026,413 acres	923,147 acres planned	90%
Retirement of Highly Erodible Land	Retire 2,554 acres of highly erodible land by 2017	8,303 acres retired and planted with protective vegetation	325%
Streamside Forest Buffers	Plant 927 acres of forest buffers next to streams by 2017	1,535 acres planted	166%
Streamside Grass Buffers	Plant 2,273 acres of grass buffers next to streams by 2017	4,824 acres planted	212%
Waste Storage Structures/Livestock	Construct 144 livestock waste storage structures by 2017	340 structures installed	236%
Waste Storage Structures/Poultry	Construct 31 poultry waste storage structures by 2017	119 structures installed	384%

going the extra mile...On the Farm

Going the extra mile to help farmers protect natural resources on their farms is at the heart of what we do. It all starts with a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan. Unlike nutrient management plans that deal exclusively with fertilizer and manure resources, conservation plans provide a comprehensive inventory of all natural resources on the farm, identify areas that need attention, and establish a timeline for installing best management practices to protect soil, water, and living resources.

A grassed waterway may be prescribed to prevent soil from washing off a cornfield. Cover crops and streamside buffers help prevent nutrients and sediment from reaching waterways. Structural practices such as animal waste storage structures and watering troughs provide water quality benefits for poultry and livestock operations. Ultimately, the farmer decides which practices to implement as time, need, and money allow. Districts provide technical assistance to install these practices

and help farmers secure conservation grants to help pay for them.

Well-managed farms protected by conservation plans do an excellent job of safeguarding natural resources and are included in Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan to restore the Bay. The Federal Food Security Act requires these plans for all highly erodible lands. At the state level, active plans must be implemented on all farmland enrolled in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program and on farmland located in the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area. In addition, the Maryland Department of the Environment requires certain livestock and poultry farmers to implement conservation plans as part of its permitting process.

In 2016, Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts developed 1,247 conservation plans for 62,115 acres of land. Another 784 plans were updated to protect an additional 47,472 acres. Together, these plans included 2,730 best management practices.



Melissa Pierce

*Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist
Washington County Soil Conservation District
Position Funding Source: Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant*

Melissa joined the Washington County Soil Conservation District as a technician in 2015. Today, she helps farmers to install watering troughs, roof runoff systems, stream crossings, and livestock fencing to help protect streams from animal impacts. Melissa is currently working with a farmer to install a livestock waste storage structure. Next up, learning how to develop Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans to address all natural resource concerns on a farm.

"I really enjoy working with the farmers and landowners. Sometimes it can be challenging to explain how the different environmental regulations work, but it's nice when I'm able to locate cost-share funds to get a project off the drawing board and in the ground."

going the extra mile...Helping Farmers Fund Conservation Projects

Soil conservation districts go the extra mile to help farmers sort through the maze of local, state, and federal grant and loan programs available to help them install best management practices on their farms. In 2016, soil conservation districts helped Maryland farmers obtain approximately \$49 million in conservation grants through the following programs:

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program (MACS)—

Helped farmers secure \$33.5 million in grants to install 2,620 conservation projects on their farms to control soil erosion, reduce nutrient runoff, and protect water quality. These projects are preventing an estimated 3 million pounds of nitrogen and 121,000 pounds of phosphorus from entering Maryland waterways. A record-setting cover crop planting of 500,000 acres is responsible for the bulk of the nitrogen and phosphorus savings.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)—

Helped farmers obtain \$11.6 million in federal cost-share grants to protect natural resources on 14,662 acres.

Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)—

Helped farmers obtain \$2.6 million in financial assistance to conserve working agricultural lands and wetlands on 785 acres.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)—

Helped farmers obtain \$1.9 million in financial assistance to

increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on 6,859 acres. *(Funding represents activity for six active projects.)*

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)—Helped farmers obtain \$215,851 to address water management resource concerns on 121 acres.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)—Helped farmers obtain \$162,867 in financial assistance to maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns on 7,531 acres.



Lindsey Rash

*Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist
Caroline Soil Conservation District
Position Funding Source: Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant*

Lindsey has been with the Caroline Soil Conservation District for eight years. She develops Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans to help farmers protect natural resources on their farms and comprehensive nutrient management plans required by the Maryland Department of the Environment for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. When she's not drafting plans, she is busy helping farmers secure financial assistance to install conservation practices outlined in those plans such as cover crops, animal mortality facilities, and heavy use area protection for poultry houses.

"Soil and water conservation is a work in progress, but it can be rewarding to see projects through from concept to finish. That's why my job is so important. I help farmers do what's needed to protect natural resources."

going the extra mile...2016 Cooperator of the Year Pleasant Valley Farm



When Robert Stabler tells you that he has farming in his blood, he's not kidding. Robert and

his brother, Drew, began farming alongside their father in 1958, building the family's Montgomery County grain and cattle farm into a major operation. The sons of a University of Maryland Extension agronomist, Robert and his brother grew up with a deep sense of the importance of clean water and healthy, productive soil. Both brothers are active in farming and the family has been inducted into the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame.

Today, Robert and his son, Randy, run Pleasant Valley Farm, a 2,650 acre grain and cattle operation located in Brookeville, with partners Breck and J.B. Debnam. Over the years, they have installed many best management practices on the farm to protect natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay.

These include the use of no-till and low-till farming techniques to control erosion and promote soil health, planting cover crops to recycle unused nutrients and protect water quality, constructing grassed waterways to reduce gully erosion in crop fields, and installing stream fencing and alternative watering facilities to protect local waterways from livestock impacts.

Robert has been a cooperator with the Montgomery Soil Conservation District for decades and currently serves as a volunteer supervisor. His steadfast commitment to soil conservation and willingness to educate students, elected officials, and citizens on the importance of agriculture and healthy natural resources has been a tremendous asset to the county, state, and Chesapeake Bay.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts is pleased to honor the Pleasant Valley Farm Partnership as its 2016 Outstanding Cooperator of the Year.

going the extra mile...In Our Towns, Cities and Suburbs

Construction, excavation, and road building activities that involve the removal of vegetative cover increase the likelihood for sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants to wash into nearby streams and waterways whenever it rains. Soil conservation districts go the extra mile to address these urban threats to water quality.

EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL PLAN REVIEWS

Since 1972, soil conservation districts have been authorized to review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for construction and land development projects in their counties. These reviews are performed by urban planners who work with builders, engineers, and zoning officials to make certain that safeguards are in place to minimize soil erosion and nutrient runoff. In 2016, soil conservation districts reviewed 11,130 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects on 37,215 acres. Just over 30 percent of these plans were approved.



Environmental site design at a shopping center in Talbot County.

going the extra mile...Education Programs

Soil conservation districts go the extra mile to educate farmers, homeowners, students, and their families on the importance of clean water, productive soil, and healthy food systems.

Districts sponsor workshops, field days, pasture walks, and demonstration projects throughout the year to educate farmers about new equipment, innovative best management practices, and the latest techniques in pasture management.

Helping local school districts comply with environmental education mandates is a top priority. In 2016, districts responded to hundreds of requests for classroom visits, career workshops, farm tours, and hands-on demonstrations at environmental education centers.

Districts promote environmental education to high school students through the Maryland Envirothon, an outdoor natural resources competition that challenges teens to solve real life environmental problems in a natural



High school students study soils as part of their Envirothon training.

setting. Teens compete at the county, state, and national levels. A group of teens from Carroll County won this year's state competition and went on to place 5th among 52 teams at the North American Envirothon held in Peterborough, Ontario. In 2017, Maryland will host this prestigious national event at Mount St. Mary's University in Frederick County.



Joseph A. Haamid
Conservation Planner
Prince George's Soil Conservation District
Position Funding Source: Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant

Joseph hit the ground running following his retirement from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service after 38 years of service. As a district conservationist during his later years with NRCS, Joseph spent a good deal of time on paperwork and administrative requirements. Now he is motivated to get out in the field, connect one-on-one with landowners, and shepherd projects through. He especially enjoys the personal relationships he has developed with urban farmers and beginning farmers.

"Sometimes if you don't hold someone's hand, it's easy to lose them on the journey."

URBAN COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES



A stormwater management pond protects water quality in St. Mary's County.

Soil conservation districts in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Frederick, St. Mary's, and Washington counties have taken on the additional

responsibility of performing compliance activities for the Maryland Department of the Environment's Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program. This local oversight provides developers with easy access to compliance officials and faster project turnaround times. In 2016, districts performed 371

pre-construction meetings and 840 inspections to ensure that erosion and sediment control measures are installed properly and protecting water quality.



MASCD is a proud sponsor of Maryland Public Television's number one locally produced show, **Maryland Farm & Harvest**. Now in its fourth season, the show takes viewers around the state to see and experience what it's like to run a 21st century farm—from technological advances and conservation challenges to age-old complications such as weather hardships. Watch online at mpt.org/farm.



About Soil Conservation Districts

Across the United States, nearly 3,000 soil conservation districts—almost one in every county—are helping land-owners conserve land, water, forests, wildlife, and related natural resources on their properties.

Here in Maryland, more than 120 volunteers serve in appointed positions on the governing boards of soil conservation districts. They work

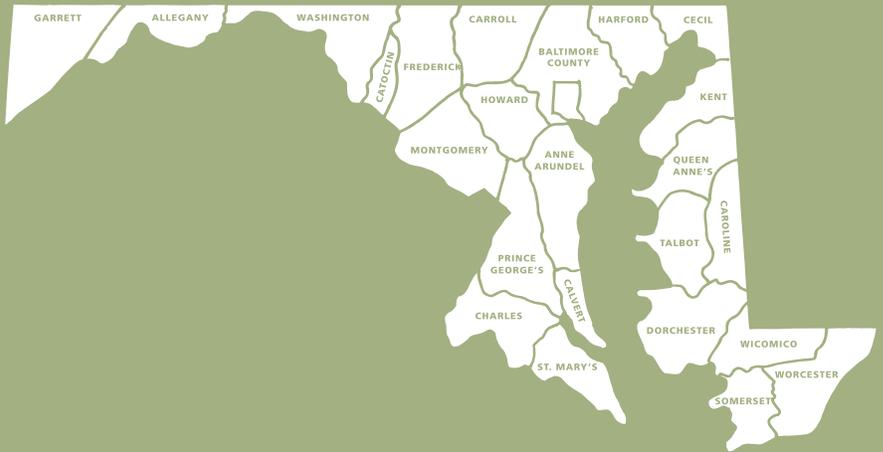
directly with thousands of cooperating land managers across the state, and their efforts impact almost two million acres of private land. The staff of a typical soil conservation district office includes a district manager, district conservationist, engineers, agricultural planners, technicians, soil scientist, urban reviewers, and administrative staff. Staff and operating budgets are usually funded through a mix of federal, state,

and county funding sources as well as grants.

Soil conservation districts carry out many federal and state mandates at the local level and serve as the agricultural representative on local, regional, and statewide environmental task forces and committees charged with protecting natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay.

MARYLAND'S 24 SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3
Catoctin	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3
Charles	301-638-3028
Dorchester	410-228-3733, ext. 3
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Garrett	301-334-6950, ext. 3
Harford	410-838-6181, ext. 3
Howard	410-313-0680
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3
Montgomery	301-590-2855
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3
Somerset	410-621-9310
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 3
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3



MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Soil conservation districts are members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership, a coalition of federal, state, and local agriculture agencies dedicated to protecting and conserving natural resources and promoting Maryland agriculture.

- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- State Soil Conservation Committee
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- University of Maryland Extension



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