



Maryland Department
of Agriculture
Office of Resource
Conservation



Introduction

Maintaining and managing agricultural public drainage

systems can be a costly and time-consuming undertaking for Maryland's 100 active Public Drainage Associations (PDAs). With more than 820 miles of local drainage systems located mainly on the Eastern Shore and in portions of Southern Maryland, Public Drainage Associations are charged with supervising their annual upkeep in a cost-effective and environmentally-sensitive manner.

Public drainage systems were created by state law more than half a century ago in recognition of their many public benefits. Research has shown that proper drainage of frequently saturated soils helps create more productive farmland, reduces flooding, protects public health, improves the transportation infrastructure and supports local economies. On the downside, agricultural drainage systems can accelerate the delivery of nutrients to nearby waterways, disturb wildlife habitat and contribute to erosion and sediment losses.

Maryland Drainage Law

The Maryland Drainage Law requires all Public Drainage Associations to have a current Operation and Maintenance Plan that has been approved by the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. Developed with assistance from the local soil conservation district, these plans are designed to minimize the environmental impacts of agricultural drainage ditches while maintaining functioning drainage systems. To that end, Operation and Maintenance Plans outline upkeep activities the PDA intends to perform for a two to three year period in order to provide adequate drainage while ensuring that water quality protection measures are followed.

Financial Assistance to Install BMPs

Heightened concerns over the environmental impacts of maintenance activities have prompted PDAs to seek new solutions to controlling unwanted drainage capacity while preserving vegetative buffers that protect ditches from sediment and nutrient runoff. To achieve this goal, PDA managers are being asked to perform an environmental balancing act that seeks to hold the line on association fees, keep ditch channels functioning properly, and protect local waterways from agricultural runoff containing sediment and nutrients.

To help PDAs achieve their water quality goals and maintain the integrity of local drainage systems, the Maryland Department of Agriculture provides cost-share grants for the installation of several eligible best management practices for drainage ditches. The funding is being made available to PDAs, in part, through an Environmental Protection Agency Section 319 Grant.

Eligible BMPs include water control structures that slow the transport of water from a drained watershed and allow natural processes to take effect, pocket wetland systems used to curb runoff and create wildlife habitat, water course enhancements designed to create more naturally functioning streams, the expansion of vegetative buffers to help intercept contaminants from surface and groundwater, and a range of repairs and outlet modifications aimed at reducing sediment losses and improving water quality.



For More Information

Please contact your PDA coordinator or local soil conservation district for more information on financial incentives for maintaining and enhancing public drainage ditches. Your soil conservation district can also provide you with free technical assistance to prepare Operation and Maintenance Plans and install best management practices.

Soil Conservation Districts

Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
Somerset	410-651-1575, ext. 3
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3



Cost-Share Assistance for Public Drainage Associations

Maryland Department of Agriculture
Office of Resource Conservation
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-841-5865 / www.mda.state.md.us

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., *Governor*
Michael S. Steele, Lt. *Governor*
Lewis R. Riley, *Secretary of Agriculture*
John R. Brooks, D.V.M., *Deputy Secretary*

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Eligible Maintenance Practices

Up to 87.5% Cost-Share



Up to 87.5% Cost-Share



Up to 87.5% Cost-Share



Up to 100% Cost-Share



Up to 100% Cost-Share



Up to 100% Cost-Share



Repair and Stabilize Emergency Blowouts and Channel Obstructions

Repairs needed for unanticipated events that may impact both ditch function and water quality.

Weirs or Other Water Control Structures

Structures built across a drainage ditch to prevent gully erosion, reduce nutrient loadings, and maintain the proper water table.

Outlet Modification and Pipe Replacement

Replace and install pipes to reduce erosion and sediment loss.

Pocket Wetland Systems and Re-flooding of Wooded Wetland Areas

Small structures such as dikes built to manage water levels and enhance or restore habitat adjacent to the ditch.

Water Course Enhancements

Bio-engineered solutions to stabilize and improve ditches and create a more naturally functioning stream.

Expansion of Vegetative Buffers

Plantings of trees, shrubs or grasses that can intercept contaminants for both surface and groundwater beyond the minimum PDA easement requirements.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES