



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

**Larry Hogan**, Governor  
**Boyd K. Rutherford**, Lt. Governor  
**Joseph Bartenfelder**, Secretary  
**Julianne A. Oberg**, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Agricultural Commission

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
[www.mda.maryland.gov](http://www.mda.maryland.gov)

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

410.841.5882 Baltimore/Washington  
410.841.5914 Fax  
800.492.5590 Toll Free

## Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes January 12, 2022

Present: Joseph Dymek  
Kelly Dudeck  
Richard Pelz  
Benjamin Sowers  
Clifford Newsome Jr.  
Amy Crone  
Michael Pons  
John Murphy  
Matthew Nielsen

Michael Levengood  
Michelle Protani- Chesnik  
Matthew Levi Sellers  
Dr. Craig Beyroudy  
Matthew Corey Spies

Absent: Thomas Mullineaux  
Frank Allnut  
Carroll Shry Jr.  
Shelby Green  
Jonathan Quinn  
Donald Maring  
Cheryl DeBerry

Elizabeth Hill  
Sean Hough  
Gordon Kretser  
Dr. Marianne Bailey

MDA Staff: Joe Bartenfelder  
Richard Colburn  
Cassie Shirk  
Jason Shellhardt  
Kevin Conroy  
Hans Schmidt  
Steve Connelly

Guest:  
Jonathan Cribbs

Approval of Minutes:

December minutes were approved 1<sup>st</sup> by Joe Dymek and 2<sup>nd</sup> by John Murphy.

## Commodity Reports:

### Ag Education Maryland- Joe Dymek:

- **MAEF:** MAEF has been busy with implementing the new strategic plan, including setting up a new committees focused entirely on Middle School and reviewing MAEF programs for quality and consistency.
- Mobile Science labs are back out at schools. There are several “scholarships” available to fund booking.
- MAEF awarded 22 Urban Garden Grants and is awaiting signed grant agreements before a press release is sent out announcing of the names of the recipients. There are also smaller sized grants supporting new or existing school or community gardens across the state.
- Maryland Farm Bureau is hosting a panel presentation on February 23 focusing on MAEF’s support of Ag literacy and Ag education.
- Lab in A Box Kits will be assembled and shipped in early February featuring “Chuck’s Ice Cream Wish”, an Ag accurate book which includes an educator’s guide, lesson plans, and materials to conduct 3 Ag science experiments.
- **FFA:** Maryland FFA was represented at the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention in December. State Officers attended sessions and workshops, promoted FFA, and socialized with other agricultural leaders. State officers also had the opportunity to showcase items for the Farm Bureau live auction to benefit their scholarship fund.
- State FFA officers continue to make chapter visits including visits to Boonsboro FFA Chapter Holiday Workshop and North Harford High School FFA Chapter.
- National FFA Week is February 19-26, 2022
- **Maryland Council for Agriculture Education:**
- Dr. Missy Welsh reported that she piloted three new fall courses at UMCP
- **Exploring Maryland Agriculture, Agricultural Industry, and Agricultural Literacy.**
- Students taking this undergraduate course stated they “have a great interest in learning more about Maryland’s local food and Ag industry”.
- **Critically Examine Maryland Agriculture, Agriculture Industry and Agricultural Literacy.** This graduate course is an advance research focused course on examining the mission and history of the Land Grant System as well as appraising the current work conducted through the University of Maryland Extension to extend research to citizens.
- **Learning and Teaching in Agriculture.** This is the second methods/teaching course for students preparing to become certified teachers in agriculture.
- This spring UMCP will be welcoming the first official enrollment of graduate students into the Master of Extension Education degree program.
- In 2022, UMD AGNR joined the Global Teach Agriculture Network/Global Learning in Agriculture Community. The Global Teach Ag Network empowers educators to address global issues in the areas of agriculture and food security.
- Speakers are available through the UMD Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture seminar series: <https://globalteachagnetwork.psu.edu/>

### **Agritourism- Kelly Dudeck:**

- In terms of agritourism and value-added agriculture hoped to be fully open but sporadic closers over state.
- Staff members contracting COVID and having to shut doors.
- Supply chain issues in craft vendors, equipment and shipping.
- Beer industry a big problem. Barley crops this past year were not a good one scrambling.
- February is Febrewary Craft Lover's Month.
- 125 businesses a crossed state doing something special to get people into rooms.
- March is Maryland wine month and will have special events.
- The events that were scheduled have been postponed and waiting to see when events can be held.
- Two things grow and fortify is working on with legislation.
- Reassessed as commercial making property taxes shoot up, value added agriculture.
- Craft beverage sectors allow shipping and home delivery asking for 6-month extension preparing if COVID returns.
- This week future harvest is having conference completely online Thursday and Friday.
- Worth hearing some of the sessions going on.

### **Ag Services- Levi Sellers:**

- Waiting for hemp application process information.
- Hope house bill 75 will allow seat for hemp position on board.

### **Aquaculture Report- Richard Pelz:**

- The most significant occurrence for the Aquaculture industry was the retirement of Karl R. Roscher Assistant Director Fishing and Boating Services who was in charge of Aquaculture for the State of Maryland.
- Currently the Program Coordinator for Shellfish Leasing & Permitting is Rebecca Thur and Alyssa Cranska supervises the staff person responsible for non-shellfish permitting.
- Don Webster remains the chair of the Aquaculture Coordinating Council that meets at the Wye Research Center
- Historical data (not including 2021 which is still being collected) shows a downward trend in production and participation. That cannot be directly linked to the pandemic.
- The numbers have continued to go down despite such efforts as The Nature Conservancy and The Pew Charitable Trusts program to Support Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) which bought oysters for sanctuary reefs.
- Non shellfish production currently includes turtles, shrimp, tilapia, barramundi, rainbow and brown trout, marine corals, ornamental fish, aquatic plants and various native fish species.
- The number of permitted producers has fallen from 56 in 2015 to 39 currently. The majority of current and previous non-shellfish operations are hobby or (small) research recirculation aquaculture systems.
- Shellfish production : No clams have been produced by Maryland growers since 2014
- Oyster production began to be monitored in 2012 and only half the year was recorded

- The following chart shows that after initial increases and rapid growth harvesting reported in bushels peaked in 2017 and has been dropping every year since then.
- The Director of Seafood Marketing Department of Agriculture has reserved a booth to showcase Maryland Seafood at the Seafood Expo North America in Boston March 11-15

**Dairy- Ben Sowers:**

- Changing the drop-dead date of manure hauling. With dairies planting more cover crop and the weather staying milder longer as it has been the last few years it would be nice to make this date flexible. Many dairies are still struggling with having enough storage and then are forced to try to figure out options in March when the weather has not been so nice.
- MACS money for manure storage. The \$200000 limit every 15 years is hardly sufficient anymore. Even before the recent inflation it was hard to get storage to carry the winter, but now is almost impossible. Some projects have doubled in price in 2 years.
- Dairy input costs have increased substantially in the last 18 months. Chemicals, fertilizer, plastic, parts, feed, labor, and many other inputs have in some cases doubled or more since last summer.
- Black headed vultures are becoming more of a nuisance.
- On a good note, mailbox prices for milk are increasing, with some over \$20. Margin protection was a help last year, and the state is paying for the premium this year which is very much appreciated.

**Direct Farm Market- Amy Crone:**

- Not much to add from last month's report; most in the farm-direct sector are spending this time of year taking vacation and planning for the upcoming season.
- Winter meetings and conferences continue to be a mix of in-person and hybrid but all plan to have some sort of their regular programming for DMFs and FMs. A few have had to cancel planned in-person gatherings and shift to virtual due to the rise in COVID cases and the threat of omicron.
- Maryland Market Money application is open for farmers markets and farm stands to participate; that can be found here.
- Some interesting pilots for incentives are starting in the region; one will occur in Montgomery County and one in the broader DC-MD-VA area. There will be a job opening for a Coordinator position for the Montgomery County project open soon.
- One last item of note: farms that are interested in selling to state agencies (MDA has set a goal for state agencies to purchase 20% of food from Certified Local Farm Enterprises. For farms to become a Certified Local Farm Enterprises, they can complete a form on the MDA website (here) and must have a Nutrient Management Plan on file with the state.

**Equine- Mike Pons:**

- The Laurel Racetrack surface continues to have freezing/thawing issues with the new racing surface, installed last summer. Again, experts have been brought in to remedy the situation. In late November, the track was closed for three weeks for repairs, then reopened, but then closed again last week, as freezing temperatures resumed. The loss of numerous racing days has sent ripples through the entire Maryland racing and breeding industry. Last Saturday, officials from the Stronach Group, owners of the Maryland Jockey Club, and a team of racetrack superintendents,

meet with local horsemen to discuss the way forward. Today, January 11, 2022, a zoom call is scheduled to update industry participants. Racing this weekend has been cancelled.

- Effective January 1, 2022, changes to the MD-Bred Bonus program were enacted to incentivize breeding to Maryland stallions. A MD-Sired, MD-Bred will receive an additional 10% bonus on top of the customary 30%, total of 40%, for any maiden winners. Restoration of pre-pandemic percentages of 30% breeder bonuses for any first, second or third by a registered MD-Bred in any race in Maryland, and stallion bonus of 10% were enacted. For MD-bred foals of 2023 and after, MD-Sired, MD-Breds will receive a 35% breeder bonus, as compared to out-of-state sired horses receiving a 25% breeder bonus. The stakes races percentage has been restored to 30% of any first, second or third, and the stallion bonuses to 10% of those monies. Hopefully, the additional funding, and restoration of higher bonuses, will increase support for MD stallions and breeding industry.
- Maryland-Bred Knicks Go, winner of the 2021 Breeders' Cup Classic, is odds-on choice to be named Horse of the Year. This is the first time a MD-Bred has won this award since the legendary Cigar, won back-to-back titles in 1995 and 1996. Knicks Go will race one more time, in the \$3,000,000 GI Pegasus World Cup Invitational at Gulfstream Park, before entering stud in Kentucky. Knicks Go is a beautifully-dappled gray horse, who has captivated the hearts of racing fans around the world. Angie and Sabrina Moore, the mother-daughter team, who bred and raised this horse, have brought national recognition to their Green Mount Farm, near Butler in Baltimore County.
- Work has begun on the building renovations required for the new Maryland Horse Industry Library and Research Center located in the Maryland Horse Breeders Building on Main Street in downtown Reisterstown. Private donations surpassing \$1M will fund the not only the building improvements but also an endowment needed for: research, scholarships, expert speakers, etc. for future generations. This new addition to the Maryland horse community is long-overdue and should be well-received.

#### **Farm Bureau- Jonathan Quinn:**

- Agricultural Education is the top policy priority for MDFB for 2022, followed by wildlife management, and land preservation/land use.
- Members approved updated policy on agricultural education, which included a focus on CTE, support for MSDE-approved Ag Ed programs and FFA into middle schools, and its partnership with MAEF.
- Members also updated policy on the University System of Maryland including a focus on building the partnership with Extension by having Farm Bureau representation on various advisory committees.
- Howard County Farm Bureau was awarded the Top Excellence in Activity Award, for counties under 600 members, for their efforts in Ag education and charitable work in providing milk donations and food for the hungry through their Lisbon Christmas parade.

#### **Grange- Clifford Newsome:**

- During national grange session president, vice president and 4 members elected were women.
- Keep in line with acknowledging women in agriculture roles.
- Featuring women and what they have accomplished in agriculture.
- Not favorable vote we hope for.

- Agriculture issues still have to lobby harder to bring it to forefront.
- Encourage COVID and booster shots along with flu shots promoted.
- Internet coverage for Maryland and hoping to get funding but looks like going to have to wait.
- Some activities like mid-winter cabinet fever are in question.
- January 22<sup>nd</sup> was current date to be held and still seeing if that is going to happen.
- Watching any bills affecting Maryland agriculture during the legislative session.
- Pennsylvania clean water conservation practices.
- Starting to see why necessary to have clean water.
- Hoping everyone will have a brighter and more successful 2022.

### **Nursery II- John Murphy:**

- Supply Chain: Product distribution will be a problem this growing season.
- - HC Company (major plant container manufacturer) has extended the wait time on new orders to 300 days. A couple of other manufacturers have increased pricing on existing orders and HC is considering to follow suit.
- - I have observed many growers are reorganizing their nurseries with consolidating their inventories, dropping products, and raising prices.
- HB 991 5 million Tree Bill: The MNLGA plans a Zoom call with the CBT, DNR, and MDA to better understand how the bill will impact the nursery industry. Several concerns include:
  - -development of a plant list of acceptable native plants (including cultivars).
  - -phased in plant selections due to length of time to produce plants of various plant growth factors.
  - -work to contract with Maryland nurseries to provide the plant material where possible.
  - -what will the distribution look like.
- MANTS 2022: The MANTS Ailes were light with about 5,700 attendees present. Even with low attendance the show was a success with most of the attendees being management and owners of various businesses. Many vendors sent their displays without personnel to attend their booths due to COVID and travel weather concerns.
- It was observed that almost all who attended followed the MANTS show mandate to wear masks at the convention center.
- MNLGA: The MNLGA held their annual show meeting at the MANTS show. The newly elected officers include: President/John Murphy @ Murphy John's Inc. and 1st Vice President Leslie Hunter Cario @ Chesapeake Horticultural Services.
- Chesapeake Green Symposium: February 17-18
- University of Maryland: University of Maryland noted an increase in students signing up for their horticultural programs.

### **Organic Farming- Matthew Nielsen:**

- Organic acres in state continue to increase.
- Certification season so growers are filling out certification forms
- Has been challenging this year with some hybrid sections but mainly in person.
- In terms of marketing the grain market has been interesting lately.
- Mainly the soy beans in strengthening organic regulations.
- Help root out some issues with buyers abroad.

- Help increase price of soybeans within the past year.
- Had done a lot for growers and create soy bean industry nationally.
- Infrastructure locally.
- Relationship between Perdue and Cap Rock in future.
- Crossed the country the shortage of manure is on everyone's minds definitely seeing it now.
- Up north and west getting manure is harder to get.
- Shifting from high priced fertilizers to manure.
- A concern for the industry to get manure, national shortage of manure.
- Generally strengthening the industry, everyone needs to be certified.
- Certified organic seed in future.
- Good programs out of FFA, funding transition cost with some coverage for 2020-2021 cost.
- There is a cap on the program but every little bit helps.
- Million-acre challenge focuses on growers in state to push envelop on regenerative and soil health, this is a diverse group.
- Working on small chapter for eastern shore, work on soil health and practices that have helped a crossed the board for everyone.
- Price of fertilizers has doubled which is why farmers are shifting over to manure.

#### **Poultry- Michael Levengood:**

- **NCC submits comments on labeling of cell-cultured meat, poultry products**  
The National Chicken Council (NCC), in comments submitted to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) on its Advanced Notice of Public Rulemaking related to the labeling of cell-cultured meat and poultry products, said **it believes cell-cultured products must be marketed in an appropriate manner that clearly conveys their basic nature to consumers and avoids confusion between cell-cultured protein products and traditional animal protein products.** "This approach ensures a neutral playing field wherein consumers are provided truthful information about cell-cultured products so that they may make choices as they deem most appropriate," said NCC SVP of Scientific and Regulatory Affairs Dr. Ashley Peterson. NCC's full letter of comment is available.
- **Researchers sound warnings on AI risk from wildfowl this winter**  
In recent weeks, researchers at USDA APHIS and elsewhere have advised the poultry industry that avian influenza (AI) is unusually prevalent in the wildfowl that is migrating across the U.S. in several flight ways this year, and they've urged chicken producers and allied businesses to take seriously all the biosecurity measures that aim to prevent AI from infecting commercial and backyard flocks.  
A recent USPOULTRY podcast featuring Dr. David Swayne, laboratory director at the Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory, provides insight into the current avian influenza situation in the U.S. and the need to implement preventative measures against avian influenza now.
- **Maryland Matters op-ed: 'Farmers have answered the call'**  
DCA's executive director, Holly Porter, wrote a guest commentary for Maryland Matters addressing everything farmers have done to reduce nutrient flows to the Chesapeake Bay, and noting that while farmers have cut back, developed areas have assumed tacit permission to pollute more. "For every eight pounds of nitrogen Maryland farmers kept out of the Chesapeake

Bay through improved practices in the past 10 years," Porter writes, "Maryland's developed areas have added back one pound of nitrogen carried in their stormwater runoff." [Read the full piece here.](#)

- **HPAI strain found in Newfoundland, Canada poultry**  
a strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was confirmed by laboratory tests in poultry on an exhibition farm in Newfoundland, Canada, on the Atlantic coastline. A World Organization for Animal Health report on the outbreak said about 360 birds, consisting of several poultry species, were affected, and that the H5N1 strain of avian influenza had made them sick. The farm's flock was tested after several days of increased mortality.
- **Biosecurity for our Poultry Flocks:** In our most recent issue of *Timely Topics*, we're highlighting reasons to be vigilant about biosecurity on chicken farms this winter. Remember the following biosecurity basics, among others, for controlling AI risk on a far: Maintain routines so that everyone who comes into contact with your flock follows the same procedures. Don't be afraid to change these procedures if you see a problem or if something's just not effective or practical. Use personal protective equipment like washable footwear or shoe covers, gloves, coveralls, and hair coverings when handling birds. These items should be worn only while caring for your poultry—never elsewhere—and be changed between birds enclosures to prevent disease spread. Give visitors and family members personal protective equipment to wear when they are in contact with your birds. Always ask visitors if they've been in contact with wild birds (like hunting for wildfowl) or pet birds or if they have their own poultry. If so, they should not go near your flock. Some avian disease agents can survive in a person's nose, without actually infecting the person, for 2 days. Clean and disinfect equipment to remove feces, feathers, and litter. Disease agents can survive for months inside these organic materials, so make sure nothing is tracked into or out of poultry houses.
- **Thighs sub in for wings on many menus:** Chicken thighs are the new wings on a growing number of restaurant menus as food prices continue to soar. The less-desirable darker meat – which is half as expensive as wing and breast meat – is debuting on menus across the country with suppliers reporting double-digit sales increases for thigh meat, according to [reports](#) in the New York Post, the Wall Street Journal and elsewhere.

### **Poultry II- Michelle Protani-Chesnik:**

- Valley Proteins haul waste from poultry plant they were shut down in December but were reopened.
- Hard to process chickens when finding a place to haul manure.
- In process of a buyout hoping to stay open and stay stable.
- Hits not only poultry plants but affects everyone.
- Weather is very unstable and compound with the holidays, driving problems.
- Birds should be leaving to go to market but lack of labor and drivers has caused delay.
- Birds getting out is backed up.
- Getting feed to the farms is getting hard.
- Overall poultry production has been rough.
- COVID in rural areas continues to rise.
- Nothing unless emergency surgery with all the COVID cases backing up the hospitals.
- Pesticide bill transfer to MDE then MDA.



### **University- Dr. Dean Beyroudy:**

- Leadership team meeting at 10.
- Spring classes start January 24<sup>th</sup>.
- In the winter session which is 3-week session of classes that are online.
- Due to COVID we are still planning to have face to face classes.
- Some discretion to faculty for the first few weeks on if they will offer face to face classes online the first few weeks.
- This is ever evolving and not sure how it is going to impact classes and campus.
- Everyone is expected on campus to be vaccinated with boosters and wear mask.
- Need to validate that they have been boosted or they will not be allowed on campus.
- Can lead to expulsion of students and termination of positions if do not comply.
- Have a few positions director institute applied agriculture.
- Meeting with search committee today.
- Application deadline was earlier last week so looking at applicants today to see if we have enough and enough qualified.
- Associate dean for extension position is also available and the closing date for application is in two weeks.
- As applications come in even beyond closing date they will still be considered.
- It is a rolling closing date.
- Also search for 12 faculty positions across the department, landscape agriculture, food science.
- Increase faculty ranks.
- New building in Clarksville for home and garden information center. We have the money for this and did ground breaking 3 years but due to COVID unable to put hole in ground hoping late spring starting construction.
- This will be game changer to expand information.
- Closely monitoring the cost of the building but due to delays the cost keeps increasing.

### **Viticulture- Corey Spies:**

- Industry Status Vineyard- Pruning has started for most mid-sized and larger vineyards. It is a long and tedious job and must be done well to establish the best chance for the new crop.
- Winery- 2021 Vintages are being prepared for bottling and are tasting very good!
- Some reds are lighter than expected but still hold quality and will produce decent Issues Vineyard- Labor continues to be a worry for larger producers and many of the jobs are being moved to mechanical methods.
- Recent issue developing is the guarantee for pesticide chemicals.
- Suppliers are not confident in the current status of the supply chain.
- MD Grape Growers Association has long offered a pesticide purchase program to its growers which allows the industry to get competitive pricing as well as helping new growers and smaller vineyards have availability to products.
- This program will not be available to producers this year which will affect small producers that do not have an established relationship with chemical business.

- One of the organizers of the program stated most chemical companies are not taking new customers so if producers cannot get product through this program, they may not have an avenue to do so.
- Equipment is also not readily available as in the past.
- Winery- Some packaging material is hard to find or not guaranteed to be available.
- Some wineries want to see better definition of MD winery classes.
- On farm winery tasting rooms have been hit hard by Covid as main marketing was Agritourism.

### Staff Updates:

#### Steve Connelly:

- Don't officially start deputy secretary position until Monday.
- Vanessa Orlando of vet board is retiring in February assigned Nathaniel Boan as replacement.
- Dairy farmers sign up for the dairy margin coverage program is ongoing and deadline is February 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Calendar year 2021 can go into county office and sign up for supplemental DNC payment.
- Did some recalculation and an addition payment for producers.
- Postponed our buyer grower expo that was to be on the 19<sup>th</sup> we are now looking for a date in the fall. This is challenging to find a date when farmers can participate and everyone in the food supply system is available to participate.
- Seafood marketing front really doing a lot of marketing of blue catfish, there will be sampling at the waterman association expo in Ocean City.
- Promoting Maryland wine for Valentine's Day and get people signed up for CSA.
- Animal health front high avian influenza in show birds and also in wild waterfowl.
- Encourage poultry producers to enhance and increase biosecurity.
- USDA has increased surveillance and testing nothing in the US.
- Animal health and state vet in Virginia and Delaware are prepared.

#### Cassie Shirk:

- First day of session has started it is the best 90 days of the year.
- A lot of prefile bills have already been dropped and can be found on the general assemblies' website.
- House bill 75 is a bill to add a seat on the Ag commission for a hemp member, this is the third year it has been introduced and seems to stall in senate so will hopefully pass this year.
- One Department bill to extend sunset date on spay and neuter program. The bill is to extend the program for 10 more years.
- Follow everything very closely.
- Isn't a lot of agriculture bills introduced yet but will look at more the next few weeks.
- Department budget hearings are in February.
- Will continue to educate members of general assembly about agriculture.

**Rich Colburn:**

- Seafood marketing supporting efforts of congressmen Harrison to get H2B workers to crab picking houses.
- Without crab meat hard to promote Maryland blue crab.
- With no one to pick them watermen are not catching them. This is a problem we face every year.

**Kevin Conroy:**

- Normal course of business.
- Moving some of our test online.
- Pesticide regulation is looking to put commercial applicator license online.
- Trying to be more user friendly and offer test online and be more of a help to the industry.
- Trying to get a bid for the Spring.

**Joe Bartenfelder:**

- Looks like we were easing on the cases of corona virus and now numbers are coming back strong.
- Had briefing yesterday and the biggest problem in our state is spaces for hospital beds.
- Not as severe as before but number of cases in state is high.
- Hitting peak season but keeping it under control.
- Ag council changed Taste of Maryland from Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> to March 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Have to make sure we stay active and stay involved as far as bills proposed and being put in.
- Get updates from Cassie and other organizations that are active with the legislature to know what's going on and keeping our Ag in the state strong.
- Deputy Secretary Oberg last day was yesterday. She took a position in Calvert County.
- Our new Deputy Secretary is Steve Connelly.
- Cassie Shirk will be pulling double duty and assuming Steve's old duties and her legislative duties for the next 90 days.
- We are up and open and everyone is getting their work done and we appreciate that.

**Hans Schmidt:**

- This is AIR season farmers required to fill out annual reports of nutrient applications over 2020.
- Electronic version farmers can go on one stop portal and fill out information.
- Last year our goal was to get 10 percent and got over 20 percent our goal now is looking to get 40 to 50 percent.
- Version went live on Thursday deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Been working on video series for conservation practices that will be on website soon.
- Hope farmers take advantage of videos that are educational and informational.
- Announce conservation buffer initiative through Feb 18<sup>th</sup> developed program from feedback from farmers during phase 3 WIP this is second year in row we offered program.
- More incentives and opportunities including an issue with deer and deer pressure on crops can assist with deer fencing.
- Get to the soil conservation office and can walk you through the process.
- Goal of 64 acres planted in buffers by June 2025 have 52,800 buffers still have ways to go.

- Last year there was legislation passed through Tree Solutions Now Act and through this act a commission has been formed.
- Goal is to plant 5 million trees by 2030 across urban and state land.
- Working with MDE, DNR and Chesapeake Bay trust and getting ready for initial commission meeting.
- DNR, MDA and Chesapeake Bay Trust are main implementors of program.
- 1 thousand dollar signing incentive.
- Taking program, we have and increasing it out to 2030.

**Jason Schellhardt:**

- Our PIO Megan has left and actively trying to fill her position.
- Anyone interested in Ag communications and government communications please let us know.
- Refresh to our website to give more modern layout and easier to navigate.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:00am respectfully submitted by: Jessica O'Sullivan