



## Maryland Agricultural Commission Working Minutes September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Present:**

Frank Allnut  
Stefanie Reiser  
Gordon Kretser  
Kellie Hinkle  
Kelly Lewis  
Joe Dymek  
Hunter Pusey  
Johnny Shockley  
Raj Kathuria  
Levi Sellers

Mike Levensgood  
Amy Crone  
Dr. Darren Jarboe  
Cliff Newsome  
Ann Merryman  
Kelly Dudeck  
Sean Hough  
Far Nasir  
Russell Shlagel

**Absent:**

Tom Mullineaux  
Paula Linthicum  
Chris Rhodes  
John Murphy  
Dr. Marianne Bailey O'Malley  
Rachel Lipman

**MDA Staff:**

Sec. Kevin Atticks  
Rachel Jones

Jessica Hackett  
Hans Schmidt  
Harrison Palmer  
Martin Proulx

**Guests:**

Emma Jagoz  
Dave Nemazie  
Annika LaFave  
Philip Bogdonoff  
Steve McHenry  
Nancy Nunn  
Heather Bruskin  
Kelsey Keadle  
Grayson Middleton  
Summer Modelfino  
Brian Cadden

Dr. Stephanie Lansing  
Diana Taylor  
Elizabeth Hoffman  
Sabrina Dobbins  
Anne Palmer  
Patti Anderson  
Stacy Kubofcik  
Dean Moses Kairo  
Sean Clougherty  
Mike Scheffel  
Zach Evans

## Call to Order:

The September 2024 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Lewis, Chair, at 10:03 am.

## Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the June 2024 meeting minutes was made by Sean Hough, second by Raj Kathuria at.

## Presentation from the Food Systems Resilience Council

- **The Commission moved to adopt the recommendations of FSRC, motion made by Kelly Dudeck and second by Stefanie Reiser.**
  - o **Specifically**, that “the Maryland Agricultural Commission examine the regulatory challenges and barriers impacting small and beginning farmers, such as zoning, permitting, business licensing, and land use agreements. Recommendations provided by the MAC will help producers in navigating contradictory regulations, economies of scale, risks associated with non-commodity or non-traditional crops, and accessing essential resources.”
- *All committees of the Commission will be asked to address these issues as it relates to their specific committee goals.*

## Committee Reports:

### Farm Profitability and Sustainability Committee - Amy Crone, Committee Chair:

- MDA’s Marketing division
  - o Maryland’s Best
    - How do we add more value?
    - Explore digital marketing opportunities
    - Explore toolkit creation
    - Bring measurable value to the farmer
    - Explore a campaign on agricultural literacy
- Business & Financial Trainings
  - o Lots of existing resources, how can we make them more available to farmers?
  - o Leverage the promotion & education of existing programs
    - Can we make recommendations to make them more farmer-friendly?
- Institutional Purchasing
  - o Great opportunity for farmers and aggregators, but generally farmers need guidance in this space
  - o How can we make farmers aware and support the aggregators
  - o How can we shape the programs to be more farmer-friendly?

### Agricultural Policy and Advocacy Committee – Paula Linthicum, Committee Chair:

- Impact on federal regulations on state agriculture

- FAA, Agri service providers need to have a relationship with this agency as we investigate the drone space
- Produce safety laws federally continue to impact local agriculture and add a paper load that most farmers cannot keep up with
- Cannabis Reform Act (State) boxes out growers in rural areas from markets by implementing a lottery system that favors urban markets
- Action Items;
  - Move that the Policy and Advocacy Committee and Regulatory Reform & Oversight Committee merge into a Legislative Affairs Committee
    - Motion was made by Levi Sellers, second by Frank Allnutt.
  - Move that the Maryland Ag Commission support the adoption of the Young Farmers Advisory Board as a Committee of the Commission and transition the existing Urban and Small Farm Advisory Committee into a Committee of the Commission.
    - Motion was made by Joe Dymek, second by Raj Kathuria.
  - Encourages the Commission to evaluate bills more diligently as they are proposed
  - Move that the Commission invite local legislators and farmers to the Ag Commission tours to make connections and host conversations about agriculture
    - Motion was made by Frank Allnutt, second by Joe Dymek.

**Regulatory Reform and Oversight Committee – Paula Linthicum, Committee Chair:**

- Action Item:
  - Move that the Policy and Advocacy Committee and Regulatory Reform & Oversight Committee merge into a Legislative Affairs Committee
    - Motion addressed in the Ag Policy and Advocacy Committee report.
- Discussed the 3 regulatory themes that challenge value added producers with Martin Proulx, VAA Specialist at MDA, and the lack of oversight and enforcement of the Cannabis Reform Act – what the challenges are for rural producers of hemp.

**Value Added Agriculture Committee – Amy Crone, Committee Chair:**

- Reviewed 3 regulatory themes
  - VA Processing
  - Agritourism & Food Service
  - VAA Retail
- Determining a clear definition of Value-Added Ag at the State and Federal level
- Marketing of VAA producers to the legislative body & to the public
  - Importance of digital media & videography
  - Value Added Ag Businesses ARE agricultural businesses
- Highlighting success stories in other counties will help showcase opportunities for other counties to use as case studies.
  - Leverage partners at UMD, UMES, and other ag programs to highlight case studies.

**Committee on Watershed Strategies – Gordon Kretser, Committee Chair:**

- In depth discussion on how WIP III has gotten us to 2025
  - What is the next version going to look like? In-depth analysis from team.

- Defining habits & how they will be incorporated into the next set of goals for the state.
- MOTION: MDA should pursue policy that supports the ultimatum – if utility solar is proposed on prime agricultural land, conservation alternatives and co-benefits must be weighed as a part of the plan with input from the soil conservation districts and other relevant partners.
  - Motion made by Gordon Kretser, second by Sean Hough.
- Biochar will be a catalyst for carbon sequestration to meet state goals.
- Cover Crop program – expecting higher planted acres for 2025.
- Agroforestry should be highlighted as an opportunity for farmers but the realities of the programs must be conveyed to farmers prior to engagement in these programs.
- Committee supports Gordon Kretser to serve as the Maryland Agricultural Commission representative on the State Soil Conservation Committee.

### **Committee on Agricultural Literacy and Education – Joe Dymek, Committee Chair:**

- Karen Fedor gave an overview of her role as the informal agricultural education liaison for MDA
- Joe Highlighted 3 priorities
  - Where can we collaborate more with Maryland State Department of Education?
  - How can Ag connect more with Local Education Authorities?
  - How can we leverage Extension in a new way for the ag community?
- Ag Awareness Days & Extension’s involvement is a great start to engaging with youth to get them into secondary education programs in agriculture.
- There are a lot of partners in the agricultural education space, but ag education is lacking a central mission and “staff person” to lead the charge.
- Maryland students are traveling to Virginia and West Virginia for college to pursue forestry.
- MOTION: MDA should pursue the development of an agricultural education and literacy specialist housed within the department to foster relationships amongst state departments and the industry to advance agricultural education and literacy in Maryland.
  - Motion made by Joe Dymek, second by Raj Kathuria.
- Struggling to recruit Maryland agricultural students to come into AGNR at UMD.

### **Commodity Reports:**

#### **Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:**

**MAEF** – Reported by Susanne Richards, MAEF Executive Director

- Preparing mobile labs for the first lab visits of the school year. Lab schedules often start later in September, once elementary students have had the opportunity to get settled into their new routines. We are almost fully booked for the entire year already.
- Working with Maryland FFA on their new strategic plan.
- Getting ready to apply for industry-recognized credentials (IRCs) including Professional Fertilizer Applicator with Local Workforce Development Boards and local school systems. **MAEF would like to hear feedback from the Commission on IRCs that industry would consider "in demand" and which would increase employability of graduates.**

- AI Certifications, CDL, Para-Pro
- Working with the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture and Junior Achievement on an agriculture storefront at the Finance Park. When completed, this facility will teach 12,000 middle and high school students per year.
- Practicing our swings for the MAEF Golf Tournament Sept. 11 at Oakmont Green. MAEF is sorry that the commission meets that day! For those who cannot play but would like to support MAEF's Scholarship Program, [use this link to make a direct gift](#) to the scholarship fund!
- Making plans for MAEF's annual banquet, Nov. 7 in Frederick, Md. Visit the MAEF's website for additional information.
- Enhancing MAEF's donor's experience when giving to MAEF through a philanthropic partnership with a platform known as FreeWill. In addition to tools to make "smart giving" easier (from donor-advised funds, or through qualified charitable distributions, for example), as the name suggests, FreeWill offers the opportunity to create a legal will completely free of charge. [Learn more about this opportunity here.](#)

MAEF is providing a copy of their new book, **Amazing! Maryland Agriculture**, to commission members.

**FFA** – Reported by Terrie Shank, Maryland FFA Executive Director, MAEF Asst. Director of High Schools

- The State Officer team participated in the National FFA Checkpoint training developing their workshop development and facilitation skills.
- They attended the MD FFA Association, FFA Alumni and FFA Foundation Board meetings.
- State FFA Officers supported the Maryland State Fair by manning the ULEARN Farm exhibits. They interviewed the "Meet the Farmer" representatives, hosted "virtual Farm Tours", read books to the children, lead crafts and shared information with the public about the many diverse industries within Maryland Agriculture.
- They assisted with the MD 4-H Horticulture and Dairy Judging events, and they supported the MD Farm Bureau by dipping ice cream on numerous occasions.
- Ella Burrier represented the MD FFA at the Thurmont/Emmitsburg Community Show, 9/5-9/7. Katelyn Bullock and Mia McGuffin will be supporting the MAEF Scholarship Golf Tournament on 9/11. Ella Burrier and William Moore will be attending the Eastern States Exposition and National FFA Eastern Regional events with me in Springfield, MA on Sept. 11-14, 2025.
- The FFA State Office team will be hosts in the Farm and Garden building and the City Street, County Roads exhibit at the Great Frederick Fair Sept 16-18, 2025 as they welcome over 5,000 elementary students to learn about agriculture at the fair. Additionally, they will also be conducting the Region 2 Greenhand Degree Ceremony on Sept. 18th.
- Ella Burrier, Katelyn Bullock and Mia McGuffin have been selected to participate in the National FFA International Leadership Seminar for State Officers traveling to Spain and Portugal in January. Abigail Effland is also being considered for attending but has been

placed on a waitlist as there were many students who applied for this experience and only 75 can attend.

- Upcoming events include: MD FFA Land Judging CDE to be held on 10/11/25 in Cumberland, MD
- National FFA Convention will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana 10/22-10/26.

#### **Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:**

- No report.

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

- As we enter the busy fall season, Maryland's agritourism industry stands at a critical juncture.
    - While farms and producers are eager to welcome visitors and sell more products, several challenges continue to impact their operations. Below is an overview of the current state of the industry as we head into this vital season.
1. Excitement for the Fall Season
    - a. Maryland farms are preparing for the influx of visitors that fall traditionally brings, especially with popular attractions like pumpkin patches, apple picking, corn mazes, and harvest festivals. Many farms see this as an opportunity to showcase their products and connect with the community, driving sales of farm-fresh goods and locally produced items. The sense of optimism is palpable, with agritourism operators expecting strong engagement and the chance to promote the value of locally grown products.
  2. Supply Chain Issues
    - a. Despite the excitement, supply chain disruptions remain a significant concern for many agritourism operations. Input costs, such as fuel, feed, and equipment, continue to rise, and some farms are struggling to secure the necessary resources in a timely manner. These challenges have the potential to impact both production and visitor experience, making it harder to keep pace with demand during peak season.
  3. Decreased Visitor Numbers and Local Purchasing
    - a. Many farms have noticed a decline in foot traffic and local buying habits over the past year. While some visitors continue to seek out local farm experiences, a broader trend of fewer people visiting and purchasing directly from farms has emerged. The reasons vary but likely include increased competition from other activities, economic concerns affecting consumer spending, and a growing shift towards online shopping and convenience products. This decline poses a financial risk, especially for farms relying heavily on agritourism income.
  4. Lack of Promotion and Marketing Support
    - a. A recurring challenge voiced by Maryland's agritourism community is the lack of effective promotion and marketing. Many operators feel that local and regional efforts to promote the value of agritourism and farm-based experiences are insufficient. Without strong visibility, farms struggle to attract new visitors and convert interest into sales. Additionally, some farms have found it difficult to compete with larger businesses that have more marketing resources.
  5. Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project
    - a. Adding to the concerns of many farm owners is the Maryland Piedmont Reliability

Project, a proposed 70-mile energy transmission line that would run through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties. This project could potentially cut through dozens of Maryland farms, posing a significant threat to agricultural operations, property values, and agritourism activities. Farmers are keeping a close eye on developments, as this could deeply impact the land and livelihoods of many in the region.

6. Early Harvest Due to Weather Conditions

- a. In addition to these challenges, farmers are experiencing an early harvest this year, with some reporting that they are about two weeks ahead of schedule due to the cool nights over the past few weeks. While this has its benefits, the rapid pace has also created added pressure on resources and planning, especially as farms gear up for the busy fall season.

**Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:**

- No report.

**Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:**

- No formal report.

**Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:**

- No report.

**Dairy I – Vacant:**

**Dairy II- Vacant:**

**Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:**

- Most Maryland farm stands and farmers markets will remain open through Thanksgiving, with a few closing at the end of October. Full list of farmers market openings can be found [here](#) and farm stands can be found [here](#).
- FMNP program transitioned to electronic format this year and has been a success. Final date to accept benefits is November 30<sup>th</sup>. MDA has a good handbook for farmers [here](#).
- The first farm in Maryland has been approved to accept SNAP Online – Captain Family Farms in Westminster.
- MDA grants from the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) in process.
- USDA grants should be announced by the end of the month.
- Quick reference for direct-marketing farmers:
  - MDA's [Farmers Market Nutrition program](#)
  - SMADC's [Maryland Market Money program](#) for the 2024 season.
  - [MarketLink](#) assistance and equipment for SNAP acceptance.
- Conference season is starting along with fall farm tours:
  - [NAFMNP Conference](#) in Denver 9/17-21
  - [MidAtlantic Women in Ag Tour](#) 10/3

- [USDA Fruit & Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee Meeting](#) 10/8-9 (online & in person)
- [Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Association meeting](#) 11/13-15 in Richmond VA
- At the federal level, there is discussion about cutting the FNMP, encourage MDA to show support of the program.
- Over \$300,000 was spent in 2024 in Maryland Market Money.

#### **Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:**

- No report.

#### **Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:**

- MD Farm Bureau is closely monitoring the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project and the potential negative impact on agricultural land

#### **Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:**

- No Report.

#### **Food Processing – Vacant:**

#### **Forestry – Hunter Pusey:**

- Three forest-related issues for today’s Ag Commission meeting, September 11, 2024.
  - **Northern Long-Eared Bat:** On November 29, 2022 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The northern long-eared bat is found in pockets across the East Coast, including Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Under ESA, the “taking” of an endangered species is permitted only upon the adoption of a long-term Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) intended to “minimize” and “mitigate” the “taking” of the endangered species.
    - AFI spent 10 years at the federal/state negotiation table developing an HCP for the then-endangered Delmarva Fox Squirrel. Upon the eve of signing the HCP, the Service de-listed the squirrel from ESA in December 2015 meaning that AFI – on behalf of Maryland’s forest products industry – did not have to sign a 50-year HCP. AFI, et al, anxiously awaits word from DNR/Service whether an HCP will be required for the bat. If so required, AFI will once again be at the negotiation table.
  - **Annual Meeting between the Counties’ Agricultural and Forestry Boards:** On July 26, 2024 AFI was able to secure a joint MDA/DNR directive to Maryland’s agricultural preservation advisory boards re § 2-501 of the Agricultural Article (Maryland Annotated Code) which states, among other things, the following: “...*It is the intent of the Maryland General Assembly to preserve agricultural land and woodland ...each county’s agricultural land preservation advisory board shall meet at least annually with its forest conservation district board in order to work*



*cooperatively to encourage the promotion and retention of agricultural land and woodland in their respective jurisdictions.”* The joint statement is attached.

- Related to this issue is MALPF’s documented efforts to conserve woodland. The following link speaks to those efforts; but, the report is dated 2009. AFI respectfully requests an update from MDA re MALPF’s forest-related conservation easement efforts similar to the 2009 report...<https://mda.maryland.gov/malpf/Documents/fact16.pdf>.
- **Imposition of the Agricultural Land Transfer Tax:** At the June 12, 2024 Ag Commission meeting, AFI noted the following: As provided in § 13–306 of the Tax – Property Article, up to \$200,000 annually of the proceeds of the tax imposed by § 13–302 of the Tax – Property Article (aka, *agricultural land transfer tax*) that are attributable to the taxation of instruments of writing that transfer title to parcels of land deemed “entirely woodland” shall be credited to the *Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund*...a Fund that underwrites several forest-related initiatives reflected in § 5-301 of the Natural Resources Article (Maryland Annotated Code). THE PROBLEM: only 3 times in the last 37 years has WIF received \$200,000 from the agricultural land transfer tax; thus, prompting AFI to intervene with DNR to find out what’s going on...something is amiss.
  - AFI has referred this issue to the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA)...no one better to solve this fiscal mystery than OLA via a fiscal compliance audit. For the record, DNR does not object to AFI pursuing this issue with OLA.

**Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:**

- No report.

**Horticulture – Vacant:**

**Livestock- Sean Hough:**

- No report.

**Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:**

- The summer has been largely hot and dry, which has slowed sales. This has been particularly impactful in the Garden Centers of Maryland after a rain-heavy string on Spring weekends.
- Many have been reacting to a Montgomery County Council member Evan Glass proposed amendment to require only native trees and plants be used in future Montgomery County development. Although most growers and landscape contactors support native planting in appropriate locations, this bill would be misguided and very difficult to implement. It is often frustrating to those in the industry when law makers rely on “Hobbyist Horticulturist” and popular, although sometime not practical trendy desires. Often new development provides far from “Native” environments and to expect native trees to thrive within these environments is unrealistic. This creates many

challenges including lack of available native options, warranty issues and a very limited plant selection for Landscape Architects, Designers and Contractors.

- Many Maryland businesses are preparing to participate and attend the National conference for the American Society of Landscape Architects being held in Washington DC this October 6-9<sup>th</sup>. This conference moves around the country alternating between East Coast and West Coast locations each year. This is the first time it has been in Washington DC since 2010.
- Most in the industry are gearing up for the normally busy fall season. Concerns over the economy and political impacts are a concern, but most are hopeful we will see close to normal sales and activity.

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

- No report.

### **Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:**

#### • Resources

- [Upland Wildlife Habitat Management: Central and Southern Appalachian Region](#)
- [A Rutgers-led study shows diminished crop yield is globally common but low yields could be addressed by increasing the number of pollinators](#)
- [Keeping native bees buzzing requires rethinking pest control](#)
- Organic Farming Association has a HOTLINE for those curious about transitioning some or all their land to organic: 833-724-3834
- [Input calculators link - for soil reports, fertilizer calculations, compost calculator, soil acidification calculator and lime calculators](#)

#### • Challenges

- Food traceability FSMA updates: coming Feb 2026. Organic farms including Moon Valley Farm are concerned about how these laws will exponentially expand our recordkeeping, infrastructure investments and daily task burdens.
  - From Clagett Farm: updates to the Organic Farm Act, we are trying to improve our post-harvest bin labeling system to tie it more effectively into our online traceability system. This winter, we may invest in a label printer and develop a more integrated system, although this will require significant labor and planning
- From Clagett Farm: A major concern that keeps me hesitant about organic certification is the use of black plastic versus corn-based bioplastic for weed control. I hope that a fully biodegradable option becomes available for organic production someday. The current process of removing plastic from the field is labor-intensive, and despite efforts to recycle with some companies, most plastic still ends up in landfills.
- From Clagett Farm: Seed stock also worries me, particularly with the spread of diseases via seeds. Many respected organic farmers are beginning to heat-treat their seeds before planting to mitigate this risk. This is something I may consider, but it would add another layer of complexity to an already challenging farming system.

- Summer recap: Claggett Farm This summer season has been hot and dry, which has posed several challenges for our organic farming system. First, much of the summer cover crop I planted did not germinate because we lack the irrigation systems needed to water them in. This impacted our nutrient management plan significantly. Out of the six fields where I planted summer cover crops, five had such poor germination that I had to till them under to reduce weed pressure. Additionally, some fields have high seedbank populations typical of organic farming systems. My goal this year was to use a stale seedbed technique with a spring tooth harrow to reduce the initial weed flush before direct seeding. However, due to the drought, many weed seeds did not germinate during the summer when I intended to stale seedbed. Consequently, when I finally irrigated the direct-seeded fields, all the weeds germinated at once, creating a significant labor investment before mechanical cultivation could be implemented. This situation has led me to question the feasibility of organic farming without relying on plastic mulch.
- From Sassafras Creek Farm- Climate change and mitigation needed to reduce the risk. High tunnels, greenhouses (with environmental controls), irrigation for crops (additional funding for ponds to capture rainfall). A lot of farmers are evaluating whether some crops can be profitably grown in MD any longer.
- From Sassafras Creek Farm- Labor. H-2A program is a lifeline but the costs are not in line with work especially, since housing, transportation and utilities are provided. The House has a reform bill but sadly no Representative from MD signed on with the bipartisan letter of support - why? MD farmers need H2A reform.
- From Sassafras Creek Farm- Competition from PA, WV and VA where cost of labor is lower. H2A reform could help off-set this.
- Opportunities + Events
  - Strategic Plant Management for Healthier Forests and Pastures Sat, September 21 • 11:30 am–3:30 pm • Armstrong County, PA
  - Chestnut Harvesting & Processing Mon, September 23 • 12–4 pm • Franklin County, PA Join us at Swallowtail Forest Farm for a hands-on experience dedicated to harvesting and processing chestnuts.
  - Efficient Use of Capital & Labor for Profitable Dairy Grazing Tues, October 8 • 9:30 am – 1 pm • Mifflin County, PA Note: this farm is currently in transition to organic and can offer insights on both organic and conventional production systems.
  - Strategies for Season Extension & Winter Cover Cropping Tues, October 8 • 3–5 pm • Montgomery County, PA Note: this farm utilizes organic practices for its CSA program
  - Organic veterinary practices in Dairy cows Dairy Cow Signals with Hue Karreman Fri, October 4 • 9 am–3 pm • Lancaster County, PA
    - Note: Hue Karreman is a pioneer of organic veterinary medicine and a writer of multiple books on organic, natural, and sustainable dairy cattle practices. After spending the beginning of his career in the Lancaster and Chester County areas as a practicing vet, he now farms in North Carolina at Reverence Farms. His dairy herd consists of 75 A2 jersey,

- 100% grass-fed cows. He has a raw milk herd share, as well as chickens, pigs, beef, and sheep that are directly marketed to customers.
- Engaging in Policymaking for Food Systems, Waste, and Climate: Tips, Strategies, and Best Practices, featuring Lorig Charkoudian Ph.D. – Member of House of Delegates, Montgomery County, Maryland - Sep 19, 2024 12-1:30p
  - Organic Certification, Plant Disease and Pest Management Field Day at One Straw Farm Wednesday, September 25, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EDT) Learn more & register here
  - Transition to Organic!! There's over \$300M over the next 5 years to help make the transition – and as all the market reports state, demand for organic food is strong and growing quickly!
    - <https://www.farmers.gov/your-business/organic/organic-transition-initiative>
    - Opportunities include: Mentoring and advice; direct farmer assistance; pinpointed market development (organic grains and livestock feed, organic dairy, organic fibers, organic legumes and other rotational crops, and organic ingredients currently unavailable in organic form)

### **Poultry I- Zach Evans:**

- September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 2<sup>nd</sup> the Delmarva Chicken Association will be hosting the 59<sup>th</sup> National Meeting on Poultry Health, Processing, Live Operations and Scholarship Golf Tournament in Ocean City, MD. More than 400 attendees from across the United States will gather to learn the latest on research and policies regarding poultry diseases, processing, and managing bird health and animal welfare on the farm.
- Administrative, Executive & Legislative Review (AELR) held public hearing September 9<sup>th</sup> on food processing residuals. Poultry community's concerns have to do with language about odor and nuisance, including a new definition never previously utilized by MDA. This could be perceived to conflict with Maryland's Right-to-Farm law as odor can be subjective and does not have a direct correlation to public health. There is also concern about legislation's section pertaining to storage facilities. For many industries this opens questions of whether rural, predominantly agricultural counties will explore ways to completely ban the storage of FPRs, which could hinder the farming operations of many family farmers.
- Delmarva Chicken Association continues assisting farmers and members with conservation assistance and cost-share programs. Recently staff has noted that each conservation district in Maryland tends to be different when working through programs like MACS and EQIP. All respective districts do a great job, this just serves as a reminder that with variability in the way programs are utilized throughout the state, organizations like DCA who have dedicated staff to help farmers understand those programs can be a great resource.
- Poultry companies and farmers await updates from the USDA regarding the next steps on GIPSA as the comment period was not extended as hoped. USDA proposed Salmonella policy is being reviewed by industry and there are some initial concerns about ability to implement suggested requirements effectively.

**Poultry II- Far Nasir:**

- No report.

**Related Services I – Frank Allnutt:**

- No report.

**Related Services II – Stefanie Reiser:**

- No report.

**State Grange- Clifford Newsome:**

- No Report.

**Turf- Gordon Kretser:**

- No Report.

**University of Maryland – Dean Craig Beyrouthy | Dr. Darren Jarboe:**

- The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) FY 2024 accomplishments were:
  - 244,716 acres planned for 2024
  - 312,592 total acres (includes acres for plans written for 2025 and 2026)
  - 19,538 fields planned
  - 1,125 farmers served
  - All farmer requests with complete data received a plan
- Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Extension and 4-H have been working with State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. David Crum to distribute personal protection equipment (PPE) to dairy farmers and their employees to protect them from highly pathogenic avian influenza in dairy cattle. Pallets of materials are moving through the Extension offices to fulfill farmer requests for PPE.
- Drone schools for ornamental horticulture and row-crop producers, and a Tech Day in collaboration with Maryland Nursery, Landscape, and Greenhouse Association were conducted. The Tech Day was held at Rupperts Nursery in Laytonsville on June 20 with over 100 participants.
- Twelve Extension Workforce Development interns completed their internships in early August. They gave final presentations about their experiences on August 1 at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center at Clarksville. All 12 learned about the role of an Extension agent and had excellent experiences.
- The 2024-2025 Maryland Association of County Agricultural Agents Officers were elected at the Annual Meeting in June.
  - Kelly Nichols, President
  - Dr. Sarah Hirsh, Immediate Past President
  - Erika Crawl, President-Elect
  - Dr. Amanda Grev, Vice President
  - Emily Zobel, Treasurer
  - Dr. Dwayne Joseph, Secretary
- LEAD Maryland Class XIII's international study trip will visit Portugal.
- Dr. Brittany Fletcher is the new ruminant livestock specialist. She will reside at the Western

Maryland Research and Education Center (REC). Brittany received a B.S. in animal science, M.S. in ruminant nutrition, and Ph.D. in small ruminant nutrition from Oklahoma State University. She is originally from Maryland.

- Dr. Veronica Yurchak is the new AgFS vegetable production specialist. She will be located at the Wye REC. Veronica received a B.S. in biology, and M.S. and Ph.D. in entomology from the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). She is currently a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Entomology at the UMD.
- The AgFS Program has eight open positions. The Caroline County AgFS educator position has reopened for recruitment of candidates. A new faculty specialist for local foods and entrepreneurship position is open on the UMD job website and is taking applications. The Rural Maryland Council funded the initial year for the position.
- The ANMP program director position will be revised and reopened. The ANMP faculty specialist position has been reopened for recruitment of candidates. Nutrient management advisor positions in Anne Arundel, Carroll, Charles, and Washington Counties are posted on eTerp.
- Andrea Franchini was selected as a Regional Network Coordinator for the AgriProspects Workforce Development Network.
- Dr. Nat Tablante was appointed professor emeritus in Veterinary Medicine due to his long-time service to the poultry industry.
- Francis Warring, the Nutrient Management Advisor in Charles County, retired.
- National Association of County Agricultural Agents Awards
  - Dr. Sarah Hirsh, Achievement Award
  - Paul Goeringer, Distinguished Service Award
  - Emily Zobel, Audio Recording, National Finalist, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Shannon Dill, Search for Excellence in Crop Production National Finalist, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Andrea Franchini, Event Promotional Package, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Dr. Haley Sater, Fact Sheet, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Dr. Drew Schiavone, Newsletter, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Dr. Amanda Grev, Personal Column, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Jennifer Rhodes, Publication, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Dr. Haley Sater, Published Photo, Regional Winner, and State Winner
  - Paul Goeringer, Educational Video Recordings, State Winner
  - Paul Goeringer, Learning Module/Notebook, State Winner
  - Paul Goeringer, Website/Online Content, State Winner
- Grants
  - University of Delaware and Jon Moyle. 2024. Implementing the Lessons Learned from the 2022-2023 Delmarva HPAI on Farm Response: Managing On-Site Mortality. USDA-APHIS. \$310,998.
  - Townsend, M.E., Hirsh, S.M., Sater, H., Dill, S., Rhodes, J., Grev, A., Semler, J., Sasscer C., Beale, B., Joseph, D., Kness, A., Nichols, K., Jarboe, D. (2024). Improving Soil Health and Water Quality through Purposeful, Site-Specific Cover Crop Planning and Management. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Innovative Sediment and Nutrient Reduction (INSR). \$595,623.
  - Jarboe, D. 2024. Agricultural Nutrient Management Program. Maryland

Department of Agriculture, \$1,271,000.

- Jarboe, D. 2024. Agricultural Nutrient Management Program. Maryland Department of Agriculture, \$475,000.

### **Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:**

- Alfatoxin testing has historically been provided by MDA, seeking an update on whether this testing will be provided this year and what the details are for this program.
- Southern Maryland farmers overall are feeling “bummed out and tired”.
  - Drought throughout the growing season
  - Lothian Grain Elevator opportunities have been shuttered
  - Bad grain prices
  - Projects in the region are not moving as fast as farmers need them to develop
- Neopestalotiopsis (Neo-P) has affected all strawberry plants coming from Canada, Florida, California, Carolina, etc.
  - No warranties on strawberry plants for 2024. Recommendations from North Carolina Extension have been “if you can do without planting strawberries this year, don’t risk it”.
  - Strawberries are a high risk, high reward crop, however Neo-P could be an industry-ruining disease.
  - Recommendation that if fungicides to treat and/or prevent Neo-P are created, that Maryland State Chemist take immediate and rapid adoption for emergency labeling.

### **Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O’Malley:**

- No report.

### **Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:**

- No report.

### **Young Farmers Advisory Board – Jenell Eck McHenry:**

- The [Young Farmers Survey](#) is still out, we will be collecting responses until mid-January. We are planning results to come out in the Spring with an event to get them off the ground and sponsors the first opportunity to view results.
- We are working on a farm tour in QA/Kent county for our group's next meeting in October.
- We are working on a deer damage subcommittee to talk about challenges we face. We have a DNR rep on our board at this time and believe this may be helpful in expressing some issues we are still facing.

## **Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:**

### **Secretary Kevin Atticks:**

- Agricultural education continues to be critically important and leads to a lack of agricultural literacy in the public.

- Interactions with 4-H and FFA members are inspiring for the future of agriculture, but interactions with youth that have not had that opportunity shows the need for more agricultural education for students.
- Excited to pursue an agricultural education and literacy specialist within the department to advance that mission.
- Meat processing continues to be a statewide and regional challenge.
  - Existing processors are at capacity, challenging to startup into this business.
- Land access is a priority for MDA –
  - Continuing conversations with DNR to discuss options for new & beginning farmers to work with the state’s largest landowner
  - Evaluating existing lease structure to support table crop production (multi year leasing structure, access to irrigation, fencing, etc.)
- Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming
  - New conservation program designed to break down silo’d agricultural practices and programs
  - Conservation, best management practices, agricultural practices, education, community practices, nonconventional good agricultural practices, etc.
  - This program is being built through engaging with the agricultural community and taking in ideas, to best fit Maryland agriculture.

**Rachel Jones:**

- AELR has received the emergency regulations for the Food Processing Residual application permit.
  - MDA will be hosting a listening session on 9/17 to receive feedback from stakeholders on proposed regulations.
- Solar – MDA hosted a solar summit last year
  - MDA is hosting another summit in conjunction with University of Maryland Extension
    - 9/26/2024 at 10:00 AM

**Hans Schmidt:**

- FY24 was a banner year for cover crop signups, FY25 is anticipated to be one of the largest years for signup.
- MDE is hosting listening sessions for updates to the CAFO permit.

**Public Comment:**

- None.

**Old Business:**

- None.

**New Business:**

- Anne Arundel County & Baltimore City tour scheduled for 10/9



- Committee Meetings scheduled on 11/12 & 11/13
- Next Full Commission Meeting on 12/11

Meeting Adjourned 12:01 pm by Frank Allnutt seconded by Raj Kathuria.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary