



**MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

**Minutes**

**September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Location: 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis MD 21401**

**Join Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81851415454?pwd=V6rjB0kBDpEPHfcKzGKpVV41w6cR27.1>**

**Meeting ID: 818 5141 5454 Passcode: 510995**

**Present:**

Dr. Melissa Welsh  
Frank Allnut  
Raj Kathuria  
Amy Crone, Chair  
Ann Merryman  
Kelly Lewis, Vice Chair  
Emma Jagoz  
Zach Evans

Dr. Marianne Bailey  
Johnny Shockley  
Kellie Hinkle  
Stefanie Reiser  
Hunter Pusey  
Gordon Kretser  
Dr. Darren Jarboe  
Russel Shlagel

**Absent:**

Paula Linthicum  
Chris Rhodes  
Nikita Bocharov  
Sean Hough

Janna Howley  
Levi Sellers  
John Murphy  
Richard Stonebreaker  
Rachel Lipman

**MDA Senior Staff:**

Secretary Kevin Atticks  
Deputy Secretary Steve Connolly  
Jessica Hackett

Assistant Secretary Hans Schmidt  
Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk  
Assistant Secretary Heather Barthel

**Guests:**

Robert Ferrier, MPT  
Frank Batavick, MPT  
Meghan Honesto, MPT  
Anne Litz, MHIB  
Dean Wendy Powers, UMD AGNR  
Kara Mobley, UMD NASA  
Gwen Brown, MDOL  
Taylor Curry, MDOL  
Stacy Jefferson, MDOL  
Jenell Eck McHenry, Young Farmers  
Allison Roe, MARBIDCO  
Scott Larzelere, MDA

Grayson Middleton, DCA  
Jonathan Cribbs, Delmarva Farmer  
Mark Powell, MDA  
Katie Stevens, Frederick Office of Agriculture  
Kelsey Keadle, Washington County Agriculture  
Dr. Jennifer Trout, MDA State Veterinarian  
Mike Maddox, ESSIC  
Dave Nemazie, UMCES  
Annika LaFave, MDEM FSRC  
John Hartline, TCCSMD  
Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO  
Brian Cadden, MARBIDCO

## **Call to Order:**

The September 2025 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Amy Crone, Chair, at 10:05 am.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the June 2025 meeting minutes was made by Kelly Lewis, second by Raj Kathuria.

## **Presentations:**

- **Stacey Jefferson, Maryland Department of Labor**
  - [Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance \(FAMLI\) System](#)
- **Meghan Honesto, Maryland Public Television**
  - **Maryland Farm and Harvest ([video](#))**

## **Committee Reports:**

### **Farm Profitability & Sustainability Committee – Emma Jagoz, Chair:**

The Committee began discussion on priorities in the proposed definition of agriculture. The document prepared by the University of Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative's Brinsfield Interns was shared with the Committee ahead of the meeting for discussion. The Committee prioritized:

- Niche industries
- Language including farm operations, management, infrastructure and processing
- Water based farming & products (aquaculture)
- Tree growing for agricultural benefit (conservation or arboriculture)
- Refining biochar and biofuels from agricultural products for agricultural use
- Urban agriculture
- Language points to include
  - “Included but not limited to”
  - “...discretion given to the Secretary of Agriculture for interagency collaboration”

Kelly Lewis moved to research other state definitions to bring context to Maryland's definition, Amy Crone second the motion, all were in favor. The Executive Secretary will compile definitions before the next meeting. The Committee also leveraged Artificial Intelligence to provide baseline language to work from.

The Committee held discussion expressing concerns with the USDA Reorganization Plan. Particularly, the impacts that it will have on local federal staffing to support key NRCS, APHIS, and UDSA programs in the state. The Committee also was concerned about the closure of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. The Committee elected to submit a formal letter to USDA during their public comment period, which the Executive Secretary will draft and submit.

Lastly, the Committee discussed opportunities with Maryland's Best staff to support and bolster the program with additional funding to create resources for members. The Committee discussed the concept of a “checkoff” style program, where a portion of sales or a membership fee is collected to provide funds to the Maryland's Best program to support branding and marketing efforts. With the buy-in from stakeholders, they will have a voice in steering the marketing of

Maryland's agricultural products and help advance the team's mission. Kelly Lewis moved that the Department should evaluate the pros and cons of this style system, Sean Hough second the motion, all were in favor.

**Legislative Affairs Committee – Paula Linthicum, Chair:**

- The Legislative Affairs Committee did not hold a meeting this month.

**Farmer Focused Geospatial & Climate Tools Discussion:**

- Presenters from NASA, ESSIC, and University of Maryland presented to Commission members the opportunities and projects they have been developing that are farmer focused and could be incorporated into the agricultural sector.

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

- Martin Proulx, MDA Value Added Agriculture Specialist provided a brief update on the Statewide Guidance Document for State Regulators to the Committee.
- The Committee discussed key priorities that should be included in the statewide definition for agriculture to include language that recognizes that the public may enter a farm in order to support sales and profitability, manufacturing on-farm is a critical component of value added agriculture and the agricultural industry, and that agricultural education events are a key opportunity for agricultural operations to engage with the public.
- The Committee discussed the State Department of Assessment and Taxation's reassessment of agricultural operations, specifically value-added operations manufacturing alcohol on-farm. This topic of discussion was brought to the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture (GICA) in their August meeting and will be discussed and reevaluated in subcommittee meetings. The Maryland Agricultural Commission is represented on GICA, and the Committee discussed some historical challenges in the discussion with stakeholders as it relates to the reassessment issues. A revised definition was proposed to SDAT to change their statute that would give ultimate discretion to the Secretary of Agriculture to approve or deny reassessment of commercial activities but was rejected in prior workgroup discussions.
- The Committee discussed opportunities to engage more with the Office of Tourism to promote agriculture and agritourism in Maryland and requested that the Office present to the Commission or Committee in upcoming months.

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

- Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA, presented updates to the Committee regarding the Chesapeake Bay Agreement as they look 'beyond 2025' (the conclusion of the most recent Watershed Implementation Plan). She shared that the Department is actively engaging in conversation with stakeholders and other states in the Chesapeake Bay Program to evaluate innovative techniques to support the work of farmers that benefits the health of the Bay.
- Alisha Mulkey, MDA, shared points with the Committee about the role of the Department and the role of Soil Conservation Districts in the approval of erosion and sediment control plans for solar projects on agricultural properties.

- The Committee discussed key priorities that should be included in the statewide definition of agriculture, to include delineating sod production from turfgrass management on golf courses and landscaping, the inclusion of biofuels and biochar as a refined agricultural product, and open the door for innovative technologies that are upcoming in the agricultural sector (including but not limited to drone usage, biotechnologies, etc.).

#### **Committee on Agricultural Literacy & Education – Richard Stonebraker, Chair:**

- The Committee reopened discussion from the past full Commission meeting around agricultural education and the CTE standards that are being proposed by the Maryland State Department of Education. Dr. Darren Jarboe approved a drafted letter that emphasizes the soft-skills learned in agricultural education programs like FFA and the broad agricultural knowledge to be a priority in future agricultural CTE discussions, Hunter Pusey second the motion, all were in favor.
- The Committee discussed key priorities that should be included in a statewide definition of agriculture, to include agriculturally adjacent processes like wood processing and aquaculture.
- The Committee also discussed the role of CALE and agricultural education groups across the state, and the concept of coagulating these groups to work towards a statewide plan. Dr. Darren Jarboe moved that the Committee reach out to the Maryland Ag Education Foundation to discuss opportunities to condense agricultural education workgroups and propose an overall statewide plan to support agricultural education. Hunter Pusey second the motion, all were in favor.

#### **Commodity Reports:**

##### **Ag Education- Dr. Melissa Welsh:**

- Maryland Ag Education Foundation continues to support planning and implementation of State Fair U learn farm activities with other agricultural volunteers. They have attended a number of local, regional and national trainings to provide resource support for state FFA programs for the upcoming school year. Terrie has begun to meet with new Ag Teachers in the state to welcome with a few resources items for their classrooms as well as engage them with all the connections they have at their fingertips for assistance throughout the new school year. On September 9<sup>th</sup> MAEF hosted their annual Golf tournament which provides funding for scholarships for Ag Education students. MSDE's content standards/Program of Study Guides will be presented to the board this month. They expect them to be approved. Through the fall/winter, they will look to "backfill" any "gaps" that exist. This is a good time for the ag community to assemble its "wish list" for programs of study. MAEF has been meeting with different segments of the ag community and asking for feedback on industry-recognized credentials that are needed. In the next year we will lean into encouraging more apprenticeships. Starting in January timeframe, all of the LEAs will need to complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, which is done every two years to meet federal requirements and ensure that programs of study match up to local employment needs. The CLNA is completed by a local committee. It is VERY important that the ag industry has one or more representatives on that committee. (let me know if you'd like to be connected [drmwelsh@umd.edu](mailto:drmwelsh@umd.edu) 724-388-6000) More information will be forthcoming. Lastly, MAEF has a draft of our College

and Career Guide now, which has a listing of ag, enviro and natural resources degrees and certificates offered by Maryland colleges/com colleges/universities. We'll be working on editing over the next few months.

- Maryland 4-H is preparing for the next five years with a Beyond Ready: Building Brighter Tomorrows strategic planning meeting on October 22. In mid-November Leaders and 4-Hers looking for leadership training can participate in the youth and volunteer 4-H Beyond Ready to Lead the Future forum! Our 4-Hers are also continuing to show their development via their displays and projects at the county and state fairs these past weeks/months and hope the Ag community continues to support our youth through their auction activities and fundraisers- it does make a difference in their lives.
- Great Kids Farm is hosting their Farm Fest '25 annual fundraiser event on Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, from 11-1 with an online silent auction and sampling of programming activities for guests to view. RSVP to attend <https://www.friendsgkf.org/>
- UMD continues to encourage students to enroll in AG teacher certification program as we need more Ag Teachers and have few in the current pool of students. Dr. Welsh is currently working with transfer students from community colleges so that there is a seamless transition and timely progression for their awarding of a teaching degree. The Master's of Extension Education program is also growing with several new students this fall.

**Agribusiness- Vacant:**

**Agritourism – Janna Howley:**

- **No report.**

**Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:**

- **No report.**

**At-Large Agricultural Services – Frank Allnutt:**

- **No report.**

**At-Large Agricultural Services – Stefanie Reiser:**

- **No report.**

**Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:**

- **No report.**

**Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:**

- This year's back-to-school lunch costs are continuing their upward climb, even as overall inflation cools. Here's a breakdown of the key insights from a **2025 Deloitte Back-to-School Survey**:
  - The Cost of Packing a School Lunch in 2025
    - **Groceries cost 23% more** than they did five years ago.
    - **48% of parents/caregivers** expect lunch costs to be higher this school year.
    - **Average daily lunch cost** (across multiple types): **\$6.15**
- **Year-Over-Year Lunch Cost Changes**
  - **School Year - % Change in Avg Lunch Cost**

- 2023 +6%
  - 2024 0% (flat)
  - 2025 +3%
- Types of Lunches Analyzed
  - **Classic:** Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich
  - **Contemporary:** Chicken & Avocado Quesadilla
  - **Health & Wellness:** Salad-Based Lunch
  - **Convenience:** Prepackaged Meat, Cheese & Crackers Kit
- Each of these lunches contributes to the **\$6.15 average**, though actual costs vary by choice.
- Lunch Options Analyzed:
  - **2025 Trend**
    - **Classic Lunch**
      - PB&J sandwich, apple, milk carton
        - **+6% YoY** (*biggest increase*)
    - **Contemporary**
      - Chicken & avocado quesadilla
        - Moderate increase
    - **Health & Wellness**
      - Salad-based lunch
        - Moderate increase
    - **Convenience**
      - Prepackaged meat, cheese & cracker kit
        - Moderate increase
  - *The classic lunch remains the cheapest*, but it saw the **steepest price hike** in 2025, due to rising prices for:
    - Apples
    - Jelly
    - Single-serve milk cartons
- Recent Price Trends
  - After a brief **price drop in February**, all four lunch types are now on an **upward trajectory**.
  - **Recent average increase: +5.5%** across lunch types (in just a few months).
- Key Takeaways
  - Packing lunch **costs 3% more** this school year compared to 2024.
  - Even the “**cheapest**” lunch option is becoming more expensive, especially due to price hikes in common grocery staples.
  - Parents and caregivers may need to **rethink lunch strategies** to balance nutrition and cost.

**Dairy I – Vacant:**

**Dairy II- Vacant:**

**Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:**

- Markets continue to hold strong despite the seasonal dip in attendance when kids go back to school.
- CSA sign-ups are ramping up this time of year for the next year’s growing season.

- Federal fiscal year ends in 9/30 – USDA funding and other grants must be awarded and spent by 10/1.
- Federal SNAP is ending, which will trickle down to impact MMM and other programs that support direct farm purchasing.

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

- Horseland was a success at the Maryland State Fair, opening engagement for over 60,000 visitors to interact with equines.
- Pimlico demolition has begun and continues to be on track as the project’s timeline.
- October is Horse Month and will be a prime opportunity for the equine industry that highlights major events like the Maryland Million, Maryland 5 Star, and the Maryland Pony Show.

**Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:**

- Maryland Farm

**Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:**

- No report.

**Food Processing – Nikita Bocharov:**

- No report.

**Forestry – Hunter Pusey:**

- AFI is pushing for Maryland Projects to use Maryland Products – specifically evaluating the Key Bridge and other Maryland transportation projects.
- Maryland forestry is known for producing strong construction timbers but is not often the first source for state construction contracts.
- The European Union Deforestation regulations require a form that delineates the land use change after a timber harvest, directly citing that wood products imported into the country cannot come from a site that is converting timber stands to agricultural land.

**Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:**

- No report.

**Horticulture – Vacant:**

**Livestock- Sean Hough:**

- No report.

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

- As we head into the busy fall season, it has been very dry. This is a particular concern for those who field grow material, but the effects of the drought impact most horticulture related businesses in Maryland. Many consumers are hesitant to purchase and plant when so dry. It is also a concern to head into winter months after a dry fall because of survivability concerns for newly planted and established plant material.

- Nurseries in Maryland continue to voice concern over the push to only plant native plant material. It is felt by many that this is a feel good effort fueled by those outside of the profession and politicians. Natives have a place in many landscapes, but to limit to only natives and in particular non-cultivar natives sends the industry back many years. Most in the industry believe professional Landscape Architects, Designers and Contractors are in a better position to decide what plants work for particular situations.
- Many are also watching the rules for invasive plants (often mistakenly grouped with non-natives). No responsible grower wants to grow and sell invasive plants in Maryland. However, most would like the ability to work through current plant cycles and to be able to sell these plants to states and other areas where they are not considered invasive.
- Schedule:
  - MNLGA Field Day – 9/11/2025 Raemelon Farm
  - American Hort Tour of Baltimore area growers and landscape companies. 9/31-10/1/2025
  - CCBC Job Fair – 9/26/2025 10am-2pm at The Lloyd Community Center Building on the Dundalk campus.

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

- No report.

#### **Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:**

- No report.

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

- Maryland is still operating on a CAFO permit from US EPA to MDE as the operator. MDE let the permit expire on July 7<sup>th</sup>, while this does not impact current CAFO permit holders, it does restrict the construction of new poultry houses or new farmers getting into the industry.
  - Within the past few weeks, a draft permit has been sent to US EPA for their review and approval from MDE.
- Through legal counsel, there is no precedent for state regulatory bodies to withhold issuing permits that are negotiated between US EPA and MDE (specifically the general discharge permit for construction operations that are allowed to continue work under expired permits).
- To date, there are over 50 houses that are waiting to be constructed in Maryland (estimated \$30M in economic activity in sitework, engineering, and construction, not including real estate transfer and taxes).
- Banks will not close on loans for construction of poultry houses without a permit and Notice of Intent, so farmers are at an economic disadvantage.
- Poultry integrators must replace several million square feet of poultry housing annually to keep up with natural infrastructure attrition and maintain continuity in operations.
- If Maryland farmers cannot keep up due to the expired permit, then integrators will pursue building in neighboring states.

#### **Poultry II- Vacant:**

**State Grange- Richard Stonebreaker:**

- No report.

**Tobacco – Vacant:****Turf- Gordon Kretser:**

- No report.

**University of Maryland – Dean Wendy Powers | Dr. Darren Jarboe:**

Dean Wendy Powers is conducting Meet and Greet events across Maryland. An event was held at the Wye Research and Education Center (REC) last Monday. The next four events are from 3-5 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

- Thursday, September 11 – Charles Soil Conservation District (Waldorf, MD)
- Tuesday, September 16 – Adele H. Stamp Student Union (College Park, MD)
- Tuesday, September 23 – Central Maryland Research & Education Center-Clarksville (Ellicott City, MD)
- Thursday, September 25 – Western Maryland Research & Education Center (Keedysville, MD)

Please register at [https://agmr.umd.edu/about/office-dean/meet-greets-dean-wendy-powers/?utm\\_source](https://agmr.umd.edu/about/office-dean/meet-greets-dean-wendy-powers/?utm_source) for this free event.

Due to the loss of federal funding, all SNAP-Ed program operations will terminate about 55 people by September 30, 2025. University of Maryland Extension is working to place people internally who are qualified for open positions. Approximately 15 people will continue for the next year to wind down the program.

Extension Workforce Development Program interns completed their 10-week full-time internship. The program is supported by an AFRI Competitive Grant from USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Student blogs can be accessed at [go.umd.edu/umeinterns25](http://go.umd.edu/umeinterns25).

Applications for participation in the next LEAD Maryland Fellowship class are due October 1. Find the online application form and details at this link:

<https://extension.umd.edu/programs/agriculture-food-systems/program-areas/integrated-programs/lead-maryland/>. Farmers are especially encouraged to apply. The final virtual information session will be held September 15th from 7:00–8:00 p.m. Program graduates will share their experiences, including how tuition was paid, how they managed the time commitment, and what participation meant to them. Register at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScANS6ThbWL9-tZUAyoxPOdYWERUDqP-j3BdE-P7ysTyjIM8Q/viewform>.

Dr. Kurt Vollmer, AgFS Extension weed specialist, was promoted to senior agent with tenure.

Dr. Laura Nixon is the new AgFS Extension IPM Entomologist for the Commercial Horticulture Team. Laura brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in chemical ecology and integrated pest management (IPM). She earned her Ph.D. in Chemical Ecology from the Bio-Protection Research Centre at Lincoln University in New Zealand where her research focused on identifying biogenic volatile organic compounds for improved border biosecurity. Laura also holds a B.Sc. (Hons) in Forensic and Analytical Science from Robert Gordon University in Scotland where she optimized analytical procedures for detecting taste and odor compounds in water. Laura's research experience includes serving as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Rutgers University where she currently works on novel IPM research for arthropod pests in apple, peach, and grape production, utilizing advanced biomolecular techniques. Prior to that, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the USDA-ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station, focusing on the chemical and behavioral ecology of invasive and native pests in temperate fruit systems. September 22nd will be her first day at University of Maryland Extension.

Dr. Pride Ebile has joined the Agriculture and Food Systems Program (AgFS) Program as the local foods and entrepreneurship specialist. He has over 10 years of experience in agriculture, sustainable farming, agroecology, and regenerative agriculture. Pride received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Agricultural Sciences from the University of Hohenheim. He attended additional training in sustainable food systems, innovation and scaling, and rural investment project management. He will be located in Southern Maryland.

The update for AgFS Program positions is below:

Nutrient management advisors have been appointed in the following counties:

- Allegany: Brianna LeMay
- Charles: BJ Bowling
- Washington: Craig Yohn
- Wicomico/Worcester: Claudio Rubione

The current UME AgFS openings are:

#### *AgFS Extension*

- AgFS county educator, Frederick County: Position is open at [https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/details/Extension-Educator--Agriculture-and-Food-Systems\\_JR102142?q=extension](https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/details/Extension-Educator--Agriculture-and-Food-Systems_JR102142?q=extension). The best consideration date is September 11, 2025.
- AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: Funding is being secured for the position.
- AgFS county educator, Talbot County: Open top internal candidates.

#### *Agricultural Nutrient Management Program*

- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted in early spring
- Nutrient management advisor positions in Baltimore, Harford, and Montgomery Counties have posted at <https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/details/Coordinator-->

Nutrient-Management-Advisor\_JR102354?q=extension. The best consideration date is September 26, 2025.

### Awards

Veronica Yurchak was named to the Fruit + Vegetable Magazine 40 Under 40 for 2025. The recognition is determined by a panel of industry experts.

Chuck Schuster received the Dr. James R. Miller Award that recognizes professional non-grower or farmer leader for contributions to the grain industry. The award was given at the Maryland Commodity Classic.

### National Association of County Agricultural Agents Award Recipients

#### *National Winners:*

- Erika Crowl: Achievement Award
- Jonathan Moyle: Distinguished Service Award
- Andrew Kness and Erika Crowl: Search for Excellence in Farm and Ranch Business Management

#### *National Finalists:*

- Amanda Grev and Raven Herron: Applied Research
- Poster
- Emily Zobel and Haley Sater: Newsletter
- Kelly Nichols, Catherine Savage, Mona Habibi, Chandini Montgomery, and Iany McDonald: Search for Excellence in 4-H Programming
- Sarah Hirsh, Shannon Dill, Megan Todd, Kelly Nichols, Neith Little, Ben Beale, Erika Crowl, and Andy Kness: Search for Excellence in Environmental Quality, Forestry and Natural Resources

#### *Regional Winners:*

- Emily Zobel, Rachel Rhodes, Mikaela Boley, and Haley Sater: Audio Recording
- Haley Sater and Emily Zobel: Event Promotional Package
- Sarah Hirsh: Fact Sheet
- Sarah Hirsh, Shannon Dill, Kelly Nichols, Neith Little, and Megan Todd: Learning Module/Notebook
- Amanda Grev: Published Photo

### Grants

- Kumar, H. and D. Jarboe. 2025. Maryland NRCS Irrigation Services Agreement. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. \$1,437,526.
- Jarboe, D. 2025. Agricultural Nutrient Management Program. Maryland Department of Agriculture, \$1,271,000. Award #FY2026MOU1139.
- Jarboe, D. 2025. Agricultural Nutrient Management Program. Maryland Department of Agriculture, \$475,000. Award #FY2026MOU841.

**Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:**

- A federal appeals court ruled that the U.S. Department of Labor was found to have violated constitutional rights in the administration of the H2A program through imposed penalties on a New Jersey farm. The constitutional violations included a delineation between a “public rights” matter versus a “private contract dispute.”
- USDA is suspending the ag labor surveys to determine AWER.
  - Job-Order submissions have been streamlined to file multiple dates-of-needs for H2A labor recruitment.
- Neo-P infection for 2025 does not seem to be present in the upcoming strawberry stock from Idaho and Canada, contrary to last years risk.
- Rainy spring, early summer and dry growing season had a dramatic impact on the Maryland vegetable & fruit crop. Growers are hopeful for a late frost and mild transition into winter.

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

- Expressed thanks to the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners for their rapid approvals for licensing of veterinarians that are coming to Maryland.

**Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:**

- No report.

**Young Farmers Advisory Board – Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair:**

- The Young Farmers Advisory Board is moving forward with the restructuring to the Maryland Ag Commission’s Committee on Young Farmers
- The Board presented the initial survey findings to a small stakeholder group for feedback in July and will be publishing the full analysis and reports in the coming weeks.

**Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:****Kevin Atticks, Secretary of Agriculture**

- Secretary Atticks recognized Anne Litz for her continued work in charting the course for the equine ecosystem in Maryland, and Dean Wendy Powers for her positive and engaged leadership and presence. He also recognized the impact that the University’s presence had on the Maryland State Fair, U-Learn Farm, and broader engagement in agriculture education.
- MDA introduced invasive plant regulations to the Maryland General Assembly in the 2025 legislative session but were withdrawn out of committee. The Department continues to engage with stakeholders (public, invasive plant opposition groups, and the nursery industry).
- MDA continues to engage with MDE on paths forward regarding the CAFO permit and how quickly the State can support the poultry industry in the construction of new poultry houses.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program’s Agriculture Advisory Committee met for the first time to bring farmer perspectives and expertise to the EPA and the program’s initiatives.

- MDA's Statewide Guidance Document for Value Added Agriculture is in its final stages of review to help policy makers navigate the complex regulatory web of value added agriculture and agritourism in Maryland.
- There was a positive case of High Path Avian Influenza in a backyard flock confirmed in Maryland on September 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Steve Connelly, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture**

- Board of Public Works
  - 28 contracts today for MALPF preservation properties
  - \$500,000 allocation to the MACS cost share program for projects

**Cassie Shirk, Assistant Secretary of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services:**

- Marketing
  - International marketing is in Singapore working on a promotion with Virginia to sell Wild Caught Blue Catfish
  - Registration is open for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Maryland's Best Expo on Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026
  - October is Maryland Apple Month
  - USDA announced \$6M of grant funding to seafood processors to expand the processing of wild caught blue catfish
    - \$2M would be available from a cooperative agreement with USDA and MDA to support the purchasing of wild caught blue catfish in Local Education Authorities
  - Maryland's Best logo will be revealed in an upcoming Maryland Ag Commission meeting
- Animal Health
  - MDA hired a new pathologist in the Salisbury Animal Health Lab
    - Expanding operations in Salisbury to offer large animal necropsies.
  - Confirmed Equine Strangles cases in Maryland Department of Information Technology
    - There has been an uptick in cases nationwide in the past month, the Department is stressing enhanced biosecurity for operations in conjunction with testing and quarantine.
    - More resources are available on the MDA website for reportable diseases.
  - High Path Avian Influenza continues to be a threat to Maryland poultry. Backyard flock owners are being encouraged through press and social media to practice biosecurity.
  - Last week, MDA hosted a kickoff call with the Farm Journal Foundation and several stakeholders for the Rural Veterinarian Shortage Solutions study.
- Class IV Limited Winery Regulations Comment Period is closing in 8 days.
- New World Screw Worm
  - USDA is still trapping mosquitos to track and monitor movement of New World Screw Worm

- No other U.S. Cases have been identified other than the traveler that came into Maryland after traveling overseas.
- Surveillance has increased, and USDA will be developing a sterile fly facility coming online in Texas.
- There is a cattle import ban into the U.S.
- Locally, the greater concern is the import of rescue animals from countries and endemic areas, animals need to be monitored for open wounds and larvae.
- MDA is considering recommending a mandated insecticide/larvicide treatment for imported animals coming into the state from those areas and indicated on their CVI.

**Hans Schmidt, Assistance Secretary of Resource Conservation:**

- 2024 Cover Crop signup was the largest ever (almost 500,000 - acres and \$32M)
  - This exceeded the budget for the cover crop program, but the department was able to leverage carryover funding to fulfill the contracts and payments to farmers.
  - The spring termination claims continued to come to the department throughout the spring and summer which caused a bottleneck in issuing payments for the high number of claims.
  - The Department is working internally with the fiscal operations team to streamline the payment process.
- For 2025, the cover crop program is scaled down to stay within the Department's budget.
  - The budget is capped at \$23M for this year's program and must stay within that budget due to the state's fiscal climate.
  - At signup there were over 1,300 applications, 600,000+ acres, and an associated request of \$33.8M to fund those applications.
    - Cover crop after sod was added as an eligible crop
    - Aerial seeding into soybeans was removed as a supplemental practice
- The Chesapeake Bay Program reporting deadline was 6/30 for FY2025
  - Phosphorus and sediment goals will be met
  - Nitrogen goals are close, but still slightly short
  - The core mission for beyond 2025 is meeting the needs of farmers first
- The new Food Processing Residuals program has been running smoothly through extensive partnerships with the industry and has dramatically reduced the number of complaints from the public.
- The Harry Hughes Center's climate impact report will be released soon.
- The Animal Waste Technology Fund is open for applications.

**Scott Lazere, Mosquito Control Program Manager:**

- Nuisance Insect Mitigation
  - Conducting Black Fly surveillance throughout the watersheds and hot-spot target areas
  - Midge control

- There was a massive spike in midge population earlier in 2025 but it rapidly decreased due to treatment and weather patterns
- The MDA Mosquito Control program is actively evaluating ways to treat the pest while managing and reducing state costs as the state's fiscal status is challenging.
- The state is looking at BTI use for treatment and partnering with other scientists to gather the most up to date information.
- Mosquito control
  - Weather patterns in 2025 led to unusual mosquito activity, delaying the spikes in mosquito season until late June
    - There were 146 confirmed mosquito traps of positive West Nile Virus in Maryland, no confirmed human cases, and only 1 equine.

## **New Business:**

- Draft Definition of Agriculture
  - “Agriculture is the production of food, feed, fiber and fuel. It is a comprehensive and dynamic industry that includes, but is not limited to, the cultivation, production, management, storage, processing, and marketing of crops, turfgrass, livestock, forestry, aquaculture, and refining of agricultural products into biofuels. Agriculture is a life science that encompasses millennia of evolving practices centered around the nurturing of growing food to nourish people, producing feed to nourish animals, processing fibers to clothe, and refining fuel to power civilizations. Agricultural practices manage the nutrients in soil to support biochemical processes that nourish plants, including the application of fertilizers, manures, and soil amendments to replenish critical elements of life, and the adoption of technologies and management practices to maximize soil health. Agricultural processes encompass pest management practices throughout the growing season, the storage and application of soil amendments, nutrients, and crop management tools like pesticides, and the harvesting of products that were nurtured throughout the season. The processing of agricultural products that were raised is critical to the agricultural industry and a vital component of the principle of agriculture that leads to food, feed, fiber and fuel. Further processing of raw agricultural products for human or animal consumption has forever been a function of agriculture's theories and practices and continues to connect all people to agriculture. Agricultural innovations continue to advance the success of agriculture and sustain the industry, allowing for maximum output with fewer inputs. All discretion and determinations of agriculture shall be deferred to the Secretary of Agriculture.”
- Appointments & Recruitment –reappointment requires reapplication
  - Current vacancies & upcoming opportunities
    - Fruit
    - Veterinarian
    - Related Services

- Agribusiness
  - Hemp
  - Controlled Environmental Agriculture
  - Disadvantaged Farmers
  - Veteran Farmers
  - Urban & Small Farmers
  - New & Beginning Farmers
- Fall Tour – Cecil & Harford Counties
    - October 8<sup>th</sup>, full day

### **Old Business:**

- USDA Public Comment Letter
  - The Maryland Ag Commission submitted a letter to USDA on August 28<sup>th</sup> outlining concerns with the proposed reorganization plan, its impacts on Maryland agriculture, and the concerns surrounding the closure of the BARC facility.
- MSDE, the Urban Schol Food Alliance, and Future Harvest will be hosting a webinar on October 6<sup>th</sup> and invited Commission members to attend.
- LEAD Maryland applications are still open.

### **Public Comment:**

- MARBIDCO announced that the livestock and blue catfish processing grants are now open and close on October 26<sup>th</sup>, more information can be found on the MARBIDCO website.

Meeting adjourned at Raj Kathuria, second by Kelly Lewis at 12:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary