



**Maryland
Department of Agriculture**

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary
Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Agricultural Commission

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry
mda.maryland.gov

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Maryland Agricultural Commission
Minutes
April 10th, 2024

Present:

Dr. Marianne O'Malley
Paula Linthicum
Frank Allnut
Gordon Kretser
Kellie Hinkle
Russell Shlagel
Kelly Lewis
Rachel Lipman
Joe Dymek

Hunter Pusey
Johnny Shockley
Raj Kathuria
Levi Sellers
Amy Crone
Ann Merryman
Kelly Dudeck
Sean Hough
John Murphy

Absent:

Chris Rhodes
Stefanie Reiser
Tom Mullineaux
Dr. Darren Jarboe
Cliff Newsome
Far Nasir

MDA Staff:

Sec. Kevin Atticks
Steve Connelly
Rachel Jones
Jessica Hackett
Hans Schmidt

Harrison Palmer
Heather Barthel
Martin Proulx
Michael Calkins
Alisha Mulkey

Guests:

Emma Jagoz
Zach Evans
Sam Friel
Charlotte Davis
Gregory Padgham
Rick Lank
Becky Rush

Kathy Magruder
Pamela Powers
Steve McHenry
Peter Scott

Call to Order:

The April 2024 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Dudeck, Chair, at 10:08 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the March 2024 meeting minutes was made by Joe Dymek, second by Raj Kathuria.

Presentation from Maryland Clean Energy Center – Kathy Magruder

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

- **MAEF** – Submitted by Susanne Richards
 - Maryland Ag Teachers Conference deadline is April 25 - this is a professional development conference for ag teachers and Extension, as well as informal educators. July 8-10 in Middletown.
 - MAEF had more than 30 applicants for its MAEF Academic and Seibel scholarships. Awards will be announced in early May.
 - The Amazing Maryland Agriculture book is now at the printer! Thank you to everyone who gave for this project, including MDA! Thank you also to Maryland Farm Bureau for offering us space to stage the distribution and helping with delivery of the book statewide!
 - Ag Literacy Week was a big success! Thanks to the many volunteer readers, including Secretary Atticks! Close to 200 books went out to readers, and more than 4,300 students enjoyed the experience.
 - New Showcase: MAEF continues to work on the design/content of the exhibit. We will be reaching out to supporters soon with sponsorship opportunities.

- **FFA** – Submitted by Terrie Shank
 - Many local FFA Chapters participated in National Ag Day events by reading to students in local elementary schools throughout Maryland.
 - The MD FFA State Officers chartered two FFA Chapters in Allegany County; a new FFA Chapter at Mountain Ridge High School in Frostburg, MD and rechartered the Fort Hill FFA Chapter (inactive for the past 13 years) in Cumberland, MD. The new FFA members celebrated with the Superintendent of Schools, CTE Director, President of the Board of Education, School administrators, local and state Farm Bureau leaders, extension educators, MD FFA Alumni and MD FFA Foundation Chairmen, Ag Expo Fair Board members, parents, and school staff.
 - The State Officer team and Executive Director met with staff and toured Garrett College and the WISP Resort, sites of the 96th MD FFA State Convention to be held June 24-26, 2024. The MD FFA Staff is currently accepting volunteers to

assist with career events and serve as judges for various events. Contact Terrie Shank @ tshank@maefonline.com if you are interested in supporting this event.

- The State Officers led the Region 2 (Frederick County) Leadership Conference. 180 students and 17 adults attended the conference. Mrs. Anna Glenn, Frederick Co Extension Educator was a guest facilitator leading a workshop on Global Agriculture. The State FFA Officers led workshops on Team building, Communications and supporting each other with Kindness.
- The Maryland Envirothon Committee met to plan the 2024 State event, which will be held on June 12 & 13, 2024 at Mt Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg. The Maryland Envirothon Committee has been granted the hosting of the 2027 International Envirothon event July 25-31, 2027, at Mt Saint Mary's College, Emmitsburg, MD. There are many opportunities to support this event by assisting with one of the five natural resource areas or serving as a presentation judge.
- MD FFA Spring Career events will be held on Saturday, April 13, 2024, at Westminster High School. The events will be held starting at 9am with the presentation of 96 new FFA jackets to members followed by 11 events. Please contact Terrie Shank if you'd be interested in sponsoring a Gift of Blue jacket next year.
- **4-H** – Submitted by Sandy Corridon
 - Maryland 4-H Foundation - our \$4 for 4-H Giving Campaign was April 4th 4/4/2024 - if you still would like to contribute - we are happy to accept - and Thank You!
 - Animal Science -Dog Skillathon The annual Maryland 4-H Dog Skillathon was held on Saturday, February 24, 2024, at the Animal Sciences Building at the University of Maryland College Park campus. The in-person contest had youth from Montgomery, Worcester, Kent, and Harford testing their knowledge and understanding of dog breeds, care and behavior, nutrition, etc.- all topics important to both family pets and caring for other animals, as well as dogs as work animals. In total, we had a dozen youth, all who had a great time on campus!
 - Horse Bowl -The annual Horse Bowl Contest was held on Saturday, Mar 9, 2024, at the Plant Science Building on UMD Campus. This year our contest was held in person, and we had 15 teams across our three age divisions with over 80 youth participating. In total, we had over 100 youth, parents and volunteers participate to make the day run smoothly. The top scoring Senior age 4-Hers will have the chance to represent Maryland 4-H's Horse Bowl Team at the Eastern Regional 4-H Horse Round-Up this November in Louisville, KY.
 - Livestock Skillathon - The annual Maryland 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest was held at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair Grounds March 2, 2024. In total, we had approximately 120 youth competitors from across the

state (Baltimore, Carroll, Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Montgomery, St. Mary, Washington) all testing their agricultural knowledge against their peers while having a great experience, which we could not have done without our team of staff and volunteers. The teen top scorers will have the chance to compete against other states at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon this November, held at the North American International Livestock Expo in Louisville, KY.

- Horse Communication Contest - April 13th
- Dairy Quiz Bowl April 20th
- Sheep & Goat Skillathon May 5th
- Environmental Science - Sporting Clays Fundraiser is coming up on April 13th we will be holding our annual Sporting Clays Fundraiser in Henderson, MD. This event is open to anyone, and pre-registration is not required! The proceeds from this event will go to the Maryland State 4-H Shooting Sports Program. These funds will help send our teams to nationals, put on more instructor training, and coordinate the statewide events Summer Employment Opportunities @ Western MD 4-H Environmental Education & Camping Center
- STEM 4-H Robotics Workshops and 4-H Engineering Workshops are coming up in May, June and July
- Statewide 4-H Faculty & Staff Retreat - was held in St. Mary's County at their Fairgrounds. Faculty from across the state participated in this professional development opportunity.
- Opportunities to host international exchange students - During the summer of 2023, University of Maryland Extension 4-H welcomed 13 Japanese delegates. Embraced host families across Maryland, this cultural exchange became a vibrant tapestry of learning and mutual enrichment. Through their stay, both the Japanese delegates and their American hosts eagerly shared the essence of their respective cultures. From food to family outings, and late-night conversations, every moment fostered deep connections and unforgettable memories. As we eagerly anticipate the upcoming summer of 2024, Maryland stands ready to extend its hospitality once more. This time, we are thrilled to host 16 Japanese youths accompanied by two chaperones, from July 25 to August 17. With each interaction, we aspire to cultivate greater cultural understanding and forge bonds that transcend borders, enriching the lives of all involved.
- Maryland Day - April 27th - Nearly 400 free events are happening on Maryland Day. Navigate campus using the interactive event map. Explore each learning neighborhood, search by keyword for your favorite activities and build your own itinerary. Our 4-H Events will be on Ag Avenue.
- State 4-H Public Speaking Contest will be held in the Edward St. John Learning & Teaching Center.

- Sporting Clays Fundraiser - Coming up on April 13th we will be holding our annual Sporting Clays Fundraiser in Henderson, MD. This event is open to anyone, and pre-registration is not required! The proceeds from this event will go to the Maryland State 4-H Shooting Sports Program. These funds will help send our teams to nationals, put on more instructor training, and coordinate the statewide event.

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- Everything is at a standstill.
- Some early bird plant sales are happening at Garden Centers.
- Several fertilizer dealers are very concerned about ingredient availability with the port closed. Most are with Liquid nitrogen solution. If supplies run out in Baltimore, Plan B is Norfolk. Resulting in additional cost. This poses a real problem for the dealer since in a fair number of cases the grower has already paid the dealer.
- Nothing to do with the Port. There is a backup corn and soybean seed in the seed processor to the dealer pipeline. Farmers seem to be in a “hold on that seed I bought for right now” mode.
- Maybe planting shorter season corn or more soybeans.
- Or some variation.
- For the most part, most small grain has at least on Nitrogen application. Some two. Very behind.
- When the planting conditions are right...stand back!

Agritourism - Kelly Dudeck:

- **A Season of Growth and Connection** Spring in Maryland marks a vibrant season for agriculture, filled with opportunities for both connection and exploration:
 - **Farm Openings:** Experience the start of the growing season with a visit to local farms.
 - **Planting Season:** Witness the seeds of summer's bounty being sown.
 - **U-Pick Experiences:** Create lasting memories by picking strawberries, cherries, and peas directly from the fields.
 - **Educational Farm Tours:** Dive into sustainable farming practices through enlightening guided tours.
 - **Farmers' Markets:** Discover fresh, seasonal produce while supporting the local economy.
 - **Spring Events:** Enjoy festivals that celebrate spring flowers, new wine releases, and farm-to-table dinners.
- **Upcoming Workshops and Surveys**
 - **Agritourism Workshop:** SMADC is Offering a Workshop for the Agritourism Sector: Unlock Your Farm's Potential: Agritourism Workshop with Hugh McPherson
 - Join Hugh McPherson for the "Unlock Your Farm's Potential" workshop on April 16, 2024, at Calvert Library, Prince Frederick. Secure your spot for insights into agritourism success. [**REGISTER NOW!**](#)

- **2024 National Agritourism Survey:** Your input is needed! The 2024 National Agritourism Survey is now open for responses from all agricultural operations that welcome visitors. Your participation is crucial in helping us understand the support needed by farmers for business assistance, networking, grants, and navigating regulatory challenges. Share your experience and help shape the future of agritourism by completing the survey. Help us understand the support required by farmers by participating in this survey. [Complete the Survey](#)
- **Policy and Collaboration Updates**
 - **State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT):** Following a recent leadership transition at the State's Department of Assessment and Taxation, there's renewed optimism for addressing the assessment challenges faced by farmers before the next legislative session begins. The appointment of an interim leader signals a potential shift towards resolving these issues. This development is a promising indication that change may soon be underway.
 - **Agritourism Workgroup Efforts:** Cultivate + Craft is actively collaborating with the Department of Health, Department of the Environment, and Department of Agriculture. Our goal is to provide agritourism operations with a straightforward guide for meeting water and sewer regulations, ensuring compliance is achievable and clear.
- **Join Us in Supporting Maryland Agriculture**
 - Explore, support, and engage with Maryland's agritourism and value-added agriculture sectors. Together, we can uphold and evolve the rich tradition and innovation of our agricultural community.

Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:

- Continuing field testing.
- Bringing in equipment from Australia and around the world to test management.
- Industry continues to develop at rapid speed locally and nationwide.
- Bio-habitat & credit trading are evolving markets for aquaculture now that guidelines have been provided from the expert panel.

Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:

- No Report.

Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:

- Spring Has Officially Sprung! Markets are opening across Maryland with Easter in the rearview mirror, and Mother's Day, and spring plantings on the horizon.
- Six landscaping trends that the major outlets, from Southern Living to Martha Stewart are predicting:
 - **Sustainable Landscaping** Sustainable living is on the rise, and according to Jeremy Yamaguchi, the CEO of Law Love, sustainability within landscaping is going to be the "#1 trend in 2024." Though Yamaguchi says this method takes various forms—his favorite being a Mediterranean garden—reducing

waste and keeping resources down to a minimum remains the focus. "These gardens are meant to be ones that embrace a person's native summer climate, rather than try to facilitate different conditions. This means growing plants native to the area and season, rather than growing plants that are found elsewhere or need way more watering, shade, cooler temperatures, etc., than what naturally occurs."

- **Outdoor Living Areas** If you're an outdoors person or someone who loves warmer weather for entertainment, then you're going to adore this trend. One of the expected top landscaping trends for 2024 is using your outdoor space to create an inviting and relaxing living area. Think beyond the patio or propping open an outdoor dining table; we're talking curating a space for lounging and hosting with outdoor kitchens, a fire pit, or gazebo. Not only does this allow you to get more use out of your yard year-round, but it invites another opportunity to showcase your personality and style with fixtures and furniture colors.
- **Low-Maintenance Plants** Tended gardens are another top landscaping trend this year, but with a helpful twist. Say goodbye to gardens that require so much of your time and hello to gardens with low-maintenance plants. By planting options like evergreen shrubs or ornamental grass, your exterior will still see the charm and appeal of colors without so much maintenance requirements. You'll appreciate the extra time you'll have on your hands with these plants since they both don't require regular pruning.
- **Planting Edimentals/Food Forests** Speaking of plants, edimentals are finding their place in landscaping this year and we can see why. These plants decorate your yard with their ornamental appeal while remaining low-maintenance and bringing fresh produce to your own yard (think plants such as herbs or vegetables like kale, cabbage, and asparagus). On top of their edibility, edimentals are less maintenance than other vegetables and don't require sowing every year or a large portion of your yard to grow. Plus, with their deep roots, they're considered to be drought-tolerant, which means they can handle dry spells. If you're looking for ways to experiment with your green thumb this year, add edimentals to your list as a sustainable way to grow a beautiful garden you can incorporate into your meals.
- **Smart Technology** If you haven't noticed, innovation is a big component to landscaping trends in 2024, so it makes sense that smart technology is on the list as well. With tools like Wi-Fi enabled outdoor lights, remote-controlled lawn mowers, and apps that connect to your outdoor essentials for operations, tending your yard is easier now than ever. What's even better is that this smart technology prioritizes maximizing the efficiency of your backyard by conserving more energy without decreasing aesthetics.
- **Gothic Gardens** While you can still expect to see colorful, whimsical gardens in 2024, moodier, dramatic palettes are also experiencing a surge in popularity. Gothic garden design is a trend that's expected to dominate

landscapes this year, according to a trend report by Garden Media. To lean into this movement, consider growing plants that bloom in dark hues and incorporate gothic-inspired statues and pottery into your garden.

- **Attracting Pollinators** Want to see more life around your home this year? Ryan Farley, the CEO of Lawn Starter, says attracting pollinators is key for landscaping trends in 2024"Because a lot of pollinators around the world, such as monarch butterflies and bees, are running into more and more threats, gardeners are curating their yards for them. By filling their yards with milkweed, butterfly weed, and borage, they create a kind of safe haven for various pollinators."
- **Using Vertical Space** If space is an issue around your home, turn to vertical space. Utilizing items such as trellises or vertical planters allows you to have the design and beauty of a garden without consuming too much ground space. Instead, living walls or trellises allow you to extend the color upward for a unique yard visual thanks to a switch in placement.
- A new term coined by Garden Media Group, hortifuturism, is all about blending technology, sustainability, and innovation. Horti-futurists is a new buzzword for urban Gen Z gardeners bringing digital and eco-conscious approaches to growing plants in whatever space is available. This new generation of gardeners that emerged from the pandemic is showing no signs of getting bored either. These passionate growers might be houseplant obsessives, trying terrariums, hanging planters as screening, no-water succulents, or grow-your-own enthusiasts (including the rise in grow your own mushroom kits). The horti-futurists might only have a doorstep, balcony, rooftop or be part of a community garden, but the trend of optimizing green spaces within city limits continues to be on the upswing.
- *Compiled from Southern Living/Advantage Landscape/Garden Design/National Association of Landscape Professionals/Martha Stewart/Garden Media Group*

Dairy I – Vacant:

Dairy II- Vacant:

Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:

- Farm stands and farmers markets are opening for the season; most notable that the Baltimore Farmers Market & Bazaar opened on 4/7. They have also instituted 'quiet hours' from 7 – 9:30am. Full list of market openings can be found [here](#) (and new this year – a map!).
- The rain is slowing everything down for farmers hoping to get into fields for planting and transplanting.
- National Farmers Market Week is set for 8/4-10, 2024
- Farmers Market Coalition held annual meeting, with news about support for farmers submitting grants.

- Interesting debate occurring about urban farming and its carbon footprint; good summary [here](#) of the issues and challenges.
- Applications open 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.
- Grants / Opportunities / Conferences:
 - [Small Acreage Cover Crop Program](#) due 4/30
 - USDA Value Added Producer Grant ([VAPG](#)), due 4/11
 - USDA Local Agriculture Market Programs ([LAMP](#)) RFPs now open, which includes the Farmers Market Promotion Program ([FMPP](#)) due 5/14, Local Food Promotion Program ([LFPP](#)), Regional Food Systems Partnerships ([RFSP](#)) due 5/14, and
 - USDA [GusNIP](#) for matching programs due 5/14
 - [National Urban Farm Festival](#), Brandywine MD 4/21
 - [National Farm Viability Conference](#), WV 4/29 – 5/2
- Jobs open in this area:
 - SMADC [openings](#)
 - Good Dog Farm [hiring](#)
 - FRESHFARM Markets [openings](#)
- Ongoing challenges for this sector: weather (rain!), processing dates, labor

Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:

- Maryland Racing bill did pass, although the plan forward is not clear. Preakness will be saved and overall the forecast is very positive for the horse industry.

Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:

- **Key Bridge Impact:**
 - Thank you to Secretary Atticks for addressing agriculture transportation issues relating to the Key Bridge. MDFB requests MDA share its successful efforts to aid truckers in moving commodity products to end-point distributors. Maryland farmers would appreciate knowing about alternate routes, weight limit extensions, etc., through MDA's website and press releases.
 - One farmer shared with MDFB he received notification that his permits to operate overweight/oversize trailers do not permit him to use either of the tunnels on Rt. 895 or Rt. 95 through Baltimore. Has MDA received similar feedback from other farmers?
 - Has MDA been successful in getting the Federal DOT to allow overweight loads on interstate highways to Virginia and Pennsylvania?
- **Legislative:**
 - *Passage of a Priority Bill - SB0367(HB048): Deer Management Programs*

- **Passage in a bipartisan vote. Once signed by Governor Wes Moore, this bill will allow counties who have successfully hosted deer management programs to continue their impactful efforts to remediate deer. Thank you to the legislators, MDA and all stakeholders who worked to get the bill passed.**
 - *Bills that did not move through Committee:*
 - **SB0193(HB0357) Cage-free egg mandate**
 - *HB1190 Pesticides PFAS*
 - *HB0993 Maryland Climate Week*
 - *HB1515 Sales & Use Tax*
- **Agriculture Education:**
 - Committee Chair Barb Glenn glennbarb6@gmail.com & MDFB Staff member Kendall Abruzzese kabruzzo@marylandfb.org
 - *2024 Strategic Goals:*
 - Advance Ag education in MD via partnership with other organizations and stakeholders, thereby increasing impact on Ag Education and developing a united voice in support of mutual goals.
 - Assure that UMD Cooperative Extension education and farm programs are working for farmers.
- *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*
 - Continue to monitor and respond to the implementation.
 - Continue to work with MAEF and MD Agriculture Teachers Association.
 - MDFB is encouraging county farm bureaus to engage with county Workforce Development Boards who are locally the driving force behind adoption of apprenticeships and industry-recognized credentialing (required for all CTE programs including agriculture education).
- *Support for Land Grant Universities* - Useful information has been finalized for MDFB families to provide assistance to youth seeking acceptance into the Colleges of Agriculture at UMD College Park and UMD Eastern Shore.

Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:

- No report.

Food Processing – Vacant:

Forestry – Hunter Pusey:

- Forestry's main policy issue of concern these last 3 months has been to safeguard the \$1 million statutory mandate for the *Mel Noland Woodland Incentive Fund* ("WIF"). WIF is forestry's principal funding mechanism dedicated to the purposes set forth in Section 5-307 of the Natural Resources Article (Maryland Annotated Code) and has received virtually zero dollars since WIF's expansion courtesy of the **Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009** – an Act which statutorily declares the nexus between a healthy watershed and a healthy, managed forest system.
- During the 2022 Session, State lawmakers mandated \$1 million annually to WIF effective July 1, 2023. The 2023 General Assembly did not reduce these dollars. Forestry rejoiced. However, the 2024 General Assembly witnessed the Moore Administration proposing to reduce WIF's \$1

million statutory mandate by 50% via the **Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act** (“BURFA”) for fiscal year 2025. *This annual bill has become the General Assembly’s go-to legislation to alter previously approved funding for agencies/programs.* AFI led an effort to convince State lawmakers to reject the 2024 BURFA recommendation of reducing WIF by \$500,000.

- The Senate moved the Budget Bill first. Things looked promising early for the Senate to approve the full \$1 million for WIF. However, depressed revenue attainment projected for fiscal year 2025 and beyond was announced in mid-March by the Comptroller and the Treasurer... right before budget decision time. In short, a structural deficit was projected meaning anticipated State revenues would fall short of meeting anticipated expenditures...so much so, a “structural deficit” was declared by Maryland’s fiscal leaders in the magnitude of \$1 billion plus.
- This changed the dynamics within the budget committees. The Senate’s response re WIF was to accept the Administration’s proposed \$500,000 cut to WIF. AFI convinced the House, however, not to accept the proposed cut, thus sending the difference to conference for resolution. When the dust settled, the House concurred with the Senate’s reduction to WIF despite AFI’s best efforts.
- Though this decision was not what AFI wanted, prevailing fiscal realities – or should we say demands imposed by Maryland’s multi-billion educational blueprint and transportation needs – forced lawmakers to make painful decisions, inclusive of reducing WIF. Important to note that WIF will still receive \$500,000 – not the full \$1 million in fiscal year 2025 like fiscal year 2024 – but in Annapolis there’s a saying...” half a \$ loaf is better than no loaf” which pretty much summarizes what happened to WIF. Other than this issue, forestry was not adversely impacted.

Hemp- Matthew ‘Levi’ Sellers:

- Hemp Left Behind: Maryland Invested in the Wrong Cannabis Industry
 - In a time when climate change is at the forefront of legislative discussions and governments around the world are scrambling to mitigate its effects, Maryland stands out with ambitious goals set forth by the administration of Governor Wes Moore. Amid these lofty aspirations, a crucial sector seems to have been left out of the equation– the cannabis industry, particularly hemp. In this report I will review the Moore Administration's ambitious goals and missed opportunities. Before we dive-in let's develop an understanding of the different approaches to cannabis legalization.
- The 3 Approaches of Cannabis Legalization
 - In 1996, California became the first state to legalize medical cannabis, sparking a trend that spread to a majority of states by 2016. While Colorado and Washington became the first two states to legalize the recreational use of cannabis in 2012, simultaneous efforts were underway to legalize hemp production in the US. Finally, the 2018 Farm Bill legalized low levels of Delta-9 THC (less than 0.3% Delta-9 THC) hemp and hemp-derived products such as cannabidiol (CBD) at the federal level. The bill also fully removed or "rescheduled" low Delta-9 THC cannabis products from the Controlled Substances Act, where they had been listed as Schedule I drugs since the CSA's inception in 1970. These different approaches to cannabis legalization can be designated as:
 - Medical
 - Adult-Use/Recreational

jobs and methods to sequester carbon, was left behind. This oversight raises concerns about whether Maryland is investing in the right sector of the cannabis industry to meet its ambitious targets.

▪ Putting Capital In A Greenhouse Gas Emitter

- A critical examination of the cannabis industry's environmental impact sheds light on this dilemma. According to a Colorado Cannabis Industry Environmental Impact report, a significant portion of cannabis facility electricity consumption is attributed to HVAC and dehumidification systems. Additionally, a study titled "The greenhouse gas emissions of indoor cannabis production in the United States" revealed alarming figures regarding the carbon footprint of indoor cannabis cultivation. The study found that indoor production emits substantial greenhouse gases, largely due to energy-intensive environmental controls and grow lights. Shockingly, the emissions associated with growing just one ounce of cannabis indoors are comparable to burning 7 to 16 gallons of gasoline.
- In Massachusetts, cannabis production accounts for 10% of the state's indoor energy use; in Colorado, one of the first states to legalize, it now emits as much carbon as mining, according to a letter from two members of Congress to the Energy Department, who wrote with concerns about the "industry's rapidly growing demands on our country's energy systems."
- | Switching to outdoor production could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a staggering 96 percent
- In contrast, outdoor cultivation and regenerative methods, as demonstrated in the hemp industry, offer a more sustainable alternative. The same study estimated that switching to outdoor production could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a staggering 96 percent. Moreover, hemp cultivation has the added benefit of carbon sequestration in the soil, contributing to efforts to combat climate change.
- Research conducted by Darshil Shah from Cambridge University reveals the remarkable potential of hemp in combating climate change. Shah, a senior researcher at the Centre for Natural Material Innovation at Cambridge, highlights hemp's ability to sequester atmospheric carbon at twice the rate of forests. Hemp cultivation can absorb between 8 to 15 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare, surpassing the CO₂ capture rates of traditional forests, which typically range from 2 to 6 tonnes per hectare per year. This underscores hemp's significance as a carbon-negative biomaterial, offering valuable opportunities for sustainable food, medicine and alternative material initiatives.
- | "Hemp is a terrific crop that enables us to tackle a multitude of human-generated environmental problems – air, soil and water for example – whilst being productive in offering us food, medicine and materials,"- Darshil Shah
- In the wake of the 2023 Cannabis Reform Act (CRA), the MD General Assembly established the Cannabis Business Assistance Fund (CBAF) under the purview of the Maryland Department of Commerce. This fund aims to offer grants and loans geared towards enhancing the capacity of minority and women business owners/entrepreneurs to engage in Maryland's adult-use cannabis industry. Notably, the CRA also ushered in a cannabinoid monopoly in MD, effectively excluding hemp industry participation from the market. Maryland's medical cannabis industry, with approximately 10% minority participation, was mired in litigation

and investigations. Despite the MD hemp industry boasting approximately 30% minority participation, along with significant investments and a commitment to more sustainable practices, it found itself sidelined by these regulatory changes.

- **Agriculture Presents A Pathway Forward**
 - Reflecting on the approaches to cannabis legalization, it becomes evident that the "agricultural approach" holds promise for realizing Maryland's environmental and economic goals. While the medical and adult-use sectors have faced challenges such as overregulation and taxation, the agricultural approach champions diversity, innovation, and disproves fear-based narratives surrounding legalization.
 - The agricultural approach, exemplified by federally legal hemp-derived cannabinoids, offers opportunities for broader business participation, interstate commerce, and sensible regulations. By embracing this approach, Maryland can leverage the potential of the cannabis plant for both industrial and therapeutic purposes while advancing its environmental and economic objectives.
 - In conclusion, as Maryland navigates its path towards a sustainable future, it must reassess its priorities within the cannabis industry. Embracing the agricultural approach not only aligns with the state's environmental and economic objectives but also paves the way for inclusive growth and innovation. It is time for Maryland to recognize the potential of regenerative cannabis production methods and invest in a greener, more equitable future for all.

Horticulture – Vacant:

Livestock- Sean Hough:

- The livestock industry is hearing of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza transferring to dairy cattle in Texas.
 - Concerns surrounding the upcoming fair & show season and the transfer of the disease in concentrated livestock holding pens from several different farms.
 - Maryland Agricultural Fair Board and the MDA Animal Health team are working on a response to this outbreak to protect the livestock industry and the fair & show industry.
- There are concerns that the MDA Animal Health team will not be present for the fair and show season, leaving a lot of risk to be incurred by each individual organization hosting an event.
 - MDA will have a presence at each fair and show, and will be available via phone, video call, etc., to assist check-in staff if there is a problem. The MDA Animal Health team will still be performing barn walk-throughs to ensure livestock are healthy, appropriately checked-in, and that conditions are appropriate for the livestock.
 - Dr. O'Malley – Recommends the Department considers allowing continuing education credits for veterinarians to volunteer at fairs & shows to check-in animals.

Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:

- Spring harvest season in nurseries, early harvesting of ...

- Business is strong for trees and shrubs in Maryland nurseries, showing robust sales across the state.
- Ruppert Nursery hosts monthly industry partner farm tours to exchange ideas.
 - MDA Marketing's Kristin Hanna recently visited to showcase their work.
- Montgomery Agricultural Producers meeting – focused mainly on the agricultural reserve and agricultural education.
- Spotted Lanternfly is a continuing issue for nursery producers.

Nursery II- John Murphy:

- No report.

Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:

- Resources

- [Transitional Production Plan Template Available for Crop Producers](#) The National Organic Program has posted a new [Transitional Production Plan](#) template developed under the Organic Transition Initiative's (OTI) Transition to Organic Partnership Program. The template will help producers qualify for OTI services provided through the USDA's Risk Management Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service. The template will also help transitioning farmers learn how to document their organic practices in preparation for the Organic System Plan process.
- [UK Study Shows Flower Margins Help Protect Orchards from Insect Pests](#) A research team found that [planting wildflower strips around apple orchards](#) in the United Kingdom provided a habitat for beneficial, predatory insects like lacewings and hoverflies that led to reduced fruit damage. When flower margins were established around five dessert-apple orchards, only 48% of trees had fruit damage, compared to 80% in orchards without flowers.
- [Spanish-Language Soil Health Course Now Available](#) The Organic Farming Research Foundation released a new, free online course in Spanish on the importance of improving soil health for agricultural production. [Los Fundamentos de la Salud del Suelo](#) (Fundamentals of Soil Health) was produced in partnership with the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, NCAT, and the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association. The course focuses on the world of soil and explains how to promote soil health as part of a functioning ecosystem.
- Great read/watch of a SARE project in VA entitled: '[The Role of Black Farmer Organizers in Promoting Healthy and Sustainable Local Community Food Access](#)'

- Challenges

- The [new organic rules](#) and new National Organic Program (NOP) updated guidebook as of March 20, 2024
 - Organic farmers now have to also create, submit and adhere to an Organic Fraud Prevention Plan, a Supply Chain Map and a Vulnerability Assessment as well as fill out additional sections on marketing and sales plans

- Opportunities

- [Organic Field Day](#) at Rodale Institute in Kutztown, PA on July 19

- [Mad Capital loans](#) for organic transition and organic agriculture get \$50M boost from Rockefeller Foundation

Poultry I- Zach Evans:

- Organizations involved in the poultry industry both intrastate and interstate within the region continue to keep open communication about disease outbreaks and other pertinent information that growers and partner organizations should be informed of.
- DAF legislation passed through great collaboration with partners and State agencies, all stakeholders are satisfied with the bill that passed.
- DCA's annual BBQ is on June 5th in Harrington, DE.

Poultry II- Far Nasir:

- No report.

Related Services I – Frank Allnutt:

- No report.

Related Services II – Stefanie Reiser:

- No report.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome:

- Unless the Maryland Congressional session is extended due to the Key Bridge disaster, many ag. bills will go unresolved. Bills connected to the Green Revolution remain a shiny new toy – great to look at but how does it work. Add the Kirwin Bill & new math to this list. More thought and effort needs to be done about the end result and cost to Marylander.
- Educational and environmental issues are of deep concern to the Maryland Grange but radical solutions are not the right answer to either. If the new norm is to spend and tax beyond the any limits, Maryland will soon join the ranks of bankrupt cities and states.
- Our viewpoint may be radical but we have been called that since we were chartered in 1874. A blizzard didn't stop us then but the storms are getting worse. We must tell our politicians what we think and insist that they listen intently.

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- In June of 2023 I reported to the commission that the Turf Producers of MD met with Secretary Atticks and voiced their concerns about the Maryland sod certification program. Since then, a lot has been learned and a lot has changed.
- Soil Conservation Districts are in charge of reviewing and approving sediment and erosion control plans, not enforcing them.
- MDE Water and Science Administration is in charge of enforcement. Either MDE inspectors themselves, or Delegated Jurisdictions that they oversee.
- Over the past 8 months I have made contact with all the delegated jurisdictions and most of the MDE inspectors responsible for the enforcement of sediment and erosion control specifications.
- The results have been nothing short of a success. Most all division directors of these enforcement jurisdictions welcomed me, took meetings with me, and thanked me for bringing the issue to them. And enough of them set up standard operating procedures to enforce the Maryland certified sod which in tune had measurable results.

- To give everyone an idea how successful this was, take a look at 2022 verse 2023 statistics provided by MDA Turf & Seed Division:
- 2022 Spring Acres planted and applied for certification – 145 acres
- 2022 Fall Acres planted and applied for certification – 1,624 acres
- 2023 Spring Acres planted and applied for certification – 282 acres
- 2023 Fall Acres planted and applied for certification – 2,804 acres
- 1,769 acres in 2022 – 3,086 in 2023 equals 175% increase in certified sod
- Non official statistics have been trending even higher. We are seeing almost 100% of all Maryland sod acres being planted with the intention of being certified. Growers are hearing the demand from their customers and are gearing. By fall of this year I would expect there to be just shy of 7,000 acres in MD either certified or in the certification process.
- Senate Budget and Taxation Committee – Operating Budget, March 2024
- Committee Narrative to Water and Science Administration
- U00A04.01 – Maryland State Certified Sod Standard Enforcement Report

**UOOA
Department of the Environment**

**Committee Narrative
WATER AND SCIENCE ADMINISTRATION**

U00A04.01 Water and Science Administration

Maryland State Certified Sod Standard Enforcement Report: The committees are concerned that that not all development projects within the State are using Maryland State Certified sod for stormwater and sediment control stabilization as required by State law and the 2011 Maryland Standards and Specifications for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control. It is the committees' understanding that the required use of Maryland State Certified sod was promulgated with the aim of upholding rigorous standards for soil and water health in our State and is a crucial aspect of environmental stewardship. Currently, enforcement efforts are fragmented between delegated and nondelegated jurisdictions, leading to inconsistencies and uncertainties in compliance. A number of development sites are presently using non-Maryland State Certified sod on their projects. Non-Maryland State Certified sod may not meet rigorous nutrient management requirements leading to additional pollutants entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Therefore, the committees request that the Maryland Department of Environment (MOE) submit a report on actions taken and proposed to ensure consistent enforcement of the Maryland State Certified sod standard. The report shall include the efforts by MOE to educate inspectors, delegated local governments, and soil conservation district offices on the State requirements to utilize Maryland State Certified sod at all development sites in the State. MOE is requested to submit the report by December I, 2024.

Information Request Mayland State Certified sod standard enforcement report

Author MDE

Due Date December I, 2024

LAND AND MATERIALS ADMINISTRATION

U00A06.01 Land and Materials Administration

Maryland Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund Annual Report: The committees are concerned that Section 9-275(c) of the Environment Article specifies that an annual status report on the Maryland Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund is due on or before November 1 of each year, which was not consistently met before the inclusion of annual budget bill language. Therefore, the committees request that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MOE) submit the Maryland Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund annual status report on November 1, 2024.

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee - Operating Budget, March 2024

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

- The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has received requests for 1,126 nutrient management plans and 74% have all the information needed to write the nutrient management plans. Of the plans with complete information, 78% have been delivered to farmers.
- The AgFS Program has 12 positions in various stages of recruitment. Three Charles County AgFS educator candidates presented in the county on April 5th and are being evaluated. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and ruminant livestock specialist positions have reached the best consideration date and candidates will be assessed soon. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description has been submitted to human resources and is expected to post on the University of Maryland (UMD) website around May 10th.
- The faculty specialist, ANMP program director candidates are being evaluated. The faculty specialist for nutrient management training position is expected to post on the UMD website soon. Offers have been made to four nutrient management advisor candidates and they have accepted. Candidates must complete more human resources steps before officially being hired. The nutrient management advisor in Carroll County resigned effective in April and the Charles County advisor will retire in May. These positions will be advertised soon.

Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:

- Conference and educational season have all but finished. It is time to get in the field and implement some of these new practices. The weather is not cooperating, and fields are saturated statewide.
- Farmers markets are slowly opening. Offering lettuce, spinach, onions, leeks, storage roots and sweet potatoes. With more product as the weather warms.
- Market gardeners in So MD are now planting or have planted peas, beets, onions, radish, carrots etc. Tomatoes and peppers are being planted in High tunnels with supplemental heat.
- Greenhouses are full of transplants waiting to go to the field. Many growers are starting to be concerned as targeted planting dates draw near with, so few days fit for field work.
- My Pet Peeve of the month has been pre-empted by a grave concern. The launch of the new digital version of WIC does not appear to be on time or even exist. I understand the need for modernization and digitizing the program. However, this program, whatever it is supposed to be will be at the expense of the farmer and more importantly the food insecure

end user. Historically WIC and FMNP vouchers have been available as early as June 1. I don't see how a new program is going to be created, farmers trained, participants trained and rolled out user ready in 60 days, especially when you consider its status. Already a WIC distribution agency we personally work with has had to cancel 2 June pop up markets. This truly hurts the food insecure.

Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:

- Solar eclipse has little effect on pets/animals since they are not prone to look directly in the sun, even during an eclipse.
- 4/11 kicks off National Dog Bite Week with the American Medical Veterinary Medical Association
- News Story – Microchip found a pet 2,000 miles from its home. Microchipping pets is critical and can be useful for multiple reasons.
- Legislation – Labor and Employment Non-compete Conflict of Interest Clause affecting Veterinarians and Health Care Workers passed and will go into effect this summer – nullifies non-compete clauses in the veterinary and health care industry.

Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:

- Maryland Wine event showcasing 20+ wineries throughout the state had fantastic attendance.
- Close to bud break, 2-3 weeks earlier than “normal”.
- Sprays are starting in vineyards for preventative maintenance.
- Large fallout between Maryland Wineries Association and Howard County
 - The Wine in the Woods event lost partnership between the two organizations.

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:

Secretary Kevin Atticks:

- Many thanks to Dr. Odian for his many years of service to the state as the State Veterinarian. MDA is currently looking for a new State Vet.
- Middleton Manor Sod answered the call to provide sod at the last minute for President Biden's press conference on the Francis Scott Key Bridge.
- 2 upcoming trade missions;
 - India with USDA to promote Maryland products.
 - Ireland with the Maryland Horse Industry Board to promote our horse genetics and international equine industry.
- MDA's fee bill did not pass, meaning we are unable to increase fees that have been stagnant for 50 years. This limits the ability of the Department to perform its functions effectively with outdated equipment and/or understaffed departments.

Deputy Secretary Steve Connelly:

- Port of Baltimore – there's a permit available for shipping containers to go overweight.
- MDA has been in contact with VDACS, MDOT, VADOT, and opening interstate travel of shipping containers of agricultural products.

- MDA & MD Fire Truck Association each sent a request to FMCSA to adjust hours of service & electronic log-book exemptions given the immediate emergency.
- Met with Maryland Farm Bureau to update them on MDA's involvement in the emergency and hear concerns that MDA can take to the Cabinet.
- 2 shallow channels have been cleared, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has forecasted a larger channel to be opened within the month, and the full channel to be open within 2 months.
- MDA will continue to keep information available on our webpage for farmers, agricultural truckers, and other agricultural organizations with regard to the FSK Incident and the impact on agriculture.

Rachel Jones:

- Maryland General Assembly 2024 Session ended 4/8/24 at midnight
- Important bills that did not pass:
 - HB0234/SB0278 MDA – Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation
 - HB0357/SB0193 Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions
 - HB1030/SB1055 Agriculture – Roosters - Restrictions
 - HB1153/SB956 Environment – Water Pollution Control – Protecting State Waters from PFAS Pollution
- Important bills that did pass:
 - SB0290 Certified Local Farm and Fish Program – Annual Waiver Reports - Alterations
 - SB1074/HB991 Agriculture - Food Processing Residuals Utilization Permit – Establishment
- MDA will put together an overview of the 2024 legislative session that will be shared with the Commission

Hans Schmidt:

- Small Farm Cover Crop program is open.
- MPT/MDA partnership highlighting agriculture during Chesapeake Bay Week.

Marin Proulx:

- Value Added Agriculture is a key point in the State Plan presented by Governor Moore.
- Established a set of measurables focused on State processes:
 - State licenses regarding the processing of value-added agricultural products
 - Wineries and Breweries with farm-designated licenses
 - Seafood related processing
- Continuing conversations to create an asset-map of agritourism operations
- Regulatory seminar series is kicking off for local agricultural and economic development offices to inform and educate county professionals on the statewide processes, while connecting them with contacts at the respective state regulatory agencies.

Guest Reports:

Steve McHenry – MARBIDCO

- MARBIDCO was fully funded, and all programs will continue.
- Received funds for livestock and blue catfish processing.

Charlotte Davis – Rural Maryland Council

- Agriculture Committee has made the SDAT bill its top priority for 2024 and ensuring agricultural businesses continue to be taxed at an agricultural rate.

Alisha Mulkey – MDA

- Moore administration is focusing heavily on climate, MDA is advocating on agriculture's behalf on the good work that farmers do in soil conservation, carbon sequestration, and water conservation.

New Business:

- Additional Legislative Updates

- FMCSA webinar will be shared with the Commission to attend.
- Department of Commerce Survey will be shared with the Commission to distribute to farmers.

- Review of Strategic Plan

Old Business:

None.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:15 pm by Emma Jagoz, seconded by Kelly Lewis

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary