



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

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Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes December 11, 2019

Present:

Ag Education: Martha Clark
Agribusiness: Thomas Mullineaux
Ag Services: Francis Allnut
Farm Bureau: Jonathan Quinn
Food Processing: Cheryl DeBerry

Horticulture: Keith Ohlinger
Poultry I: Mike Levensgood
Turf: Tom Warpinski
Veterinary: Dr. John Brooks

Absent:

Aquaculture: Tal Petty
Consumer: Carroll Shry Jr.
Dairy II: David Pyle
Field Crops: Donald Maring
Forestry: Elizabeth Hill

Nursery II: Ray Greenstreet
Organic Farming: Matthew Nielsen
Poultry II: Michelle Protani-Chesnik
University: Dr. Craig Beyroudy
Viticulture: Corey Spies

MDA Staff:

Julie Oberg
Hans Schmidt
Rich Colburn
Steve Connelly

Speaker/Guest:

Terron Hillsman (State Conservationist USDA NRCS)
Jim Eichhorst (Maryland State Executive Director USDA FS)
Kelly Dudeck (Growth and Fortify)

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Martha Clark:

- The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation is excited to have our new Executive Director, Susanne Zilberfarb, on board and moving forward with our ongoing and developing new programs and opportunities for support of our Maryland Students.

- Our Annual Banquet in November was well attended and a number of "firsts" were announced by the Foundation.
- A new giving program creating the 1989 Society has begun to celebrate the thirty successful years of the foundation and future opportunities.
- The first "Velma L. Clark Teacher of Excellence Award" was presented to Carl Kidd of Urbana Elementary School in Frederick County.
- Carl will receive a \$500 classroom award and a paid trip to the National Ag in The Classroom Meeting in 2020.
- George Mayo was recognized for his years of service and retirement as MAEF's Executive Director.
- Also recognized was Jeanne Mueller for her dedicated service as Elementary Education Director and Bonnie Werner for 30 years of service as office manager.
- The Foundation is currently working on updating grants, email lists, donor information and annual appeal.
- The initial Distance Learning Program with Goucher College ends December 13.
- There were 22 participants. Response and evaluation of the program has been excellent.
- Currently in preparation is a middle school program that will be held next spring or summer.
- The mobile labs have reached more than 75+ schools and the independent Montgomery County Lab will complete this year having reached every elementary school in the county.
- The Ag Literacy program is underway and 400 books have been ordered to be shared across the state January through March. If you would like a copy or multiple copies for your county contact Shannon Brown at the MAEF office 410-939-9030.
- A number of MD FFA Educators recently received awards from the NAAE Region VI. Our own Naomi Knight was awarded the Outstanding Service Citation for 2019.

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- Number of issues that agricultural input supply companies are concerned about primarily fertilizer and crop protection companies.
- Concerned about the regulations coming from MDA and Washington in relation to glyphosate and gramoxone.
- Gramoxone regulations that we must be concerned about within the next year are overwhelming. All employees must be educated and approved to handle gramoxone.
- Letter from folks in Rockville that we will not be able to sell weed and feed fertilizer in Montgomery County because it contains chemistry that is prohibited in Montgomery County.
- This includes not being able to sell to the farmers.
- Coming from an excellent corn harvest and better than average soybean harvest so farmers can pay off some bills and get seed for upcoming spring.
- Crop, poultry are doing ok and cover crop is up from last year.

Ag Services- Frank Allnutt:

- Agriculture and environmental law conference in November put on by the University of Maryland Agriculture Law education initiative.
- This group is made up of University of MD college of Agriculture and Natural Resources College Park, College of Agriculture and Natural resources UMES and Baltimore Law School.
- Interesting topics for an all-day event from environmental to easements to neighbor complaints and right to farm.
- Good to know that we have this resource. They have experts that you can go to and ask questions about what rights farmers have and how we are protected.

- Know that this tool and these people are there and available with not only knowledge in our county but throughout the state.

Farm Bureau- Jonathan Quinn:

- Finished with the annual convention on December 10th.
- There is a new Farm Bureau president.
- What has been passed and put in policy is the delay of the PMT.
- Maryland Farm Bureau has been going to shores to assess the chicken/hatchery processor daf and want to get it reclassified as a soil amendment so it can be more regulated.
- Chicken waste has become a problem down on the shore with the smell alone being very bad and sticks around for months. It is regulated in Delaware and cannot be spread at all in Virginia.
- Put in policy cover crop payments, anyone that takes a split payment on cover crops will not get funds till January but must claim it on their tax in December and do not have the funds available. It was put in policy to speed up the payment and get paid by December 31st.
- New officers for president, first vice president and second vice president.

Food Processing- Cheryl DeBerry:

- Processors are benefitting from the multiple winter farmers markets being held across Maryland.
- Value-added products such as frozen meats, cheeses, canned items, craft beverages and more help our farmers keep year-round cash flow.
- Your assistance in helping to promote local winter farmers markets via social media and word of mouth is appreciated!
- It sounds like the initial 2020 hemp registration information will be posted at MDA's website soon.
- Meeting in Garrett County to talk to those that did hemp this year and those that are interested.
- The overall topics were that yes it will grow but it is a learning curve with very few places to sell it.

Forestry- Elizabeth Hill:

- The Western Maryland RC&D has awarded the contract to perform the Woodyard Feasibility Study to ACDS out of Columbia, MD headed by Phillip Gottwals.
- Two other proposals were submitted from the Ireland Group and Innovative Natural Resource Solutions.
- The study will include a feasibility analysis looking at the resources and market trends within 3 hours of the George Creek Railroad to identify potential competition and buyers.
- They will come up with a business plan, management plan, marketing plan and financial plan that will help achieve the goal of retaining loggers in the area to ensure forest management continues.
- The Woodyard Study will look at merchandizing logs to provide new and value-added opportunities.
- Meetings will be held with local stakeholders, but outreach will also be made outside of the region to see what is and isn't working in other places.
- ACDS will also advise any potential risks they identify- regulatory or otherwise.
- April 2020 is the anticipated completion date.

Horticulture- Keith Ohlinger:

- State soil committee meeting on December 12, 2019 to go over next year's schedule.
- Everything is just winter work now.
- The overall season was good.
- Mid Atlantic fruit and vegetable convention January 28th-30th. Maryland State Horticulture Society annual meeting will be held at that time.
- End of year food donation program that allows 50 cents on the dollar up to \$5,000 tax credit against MD state income tax.
- Donate to certified entity such as MD Food Bank.
- End of year equipment MD Tax incentive for manure spreading equipment check with Alyssa Mulkey, deduction from your income tax.
- Visioning and where you want to go and what you want to do.
- The board's vision and mission is to formulate and make proposals on the advancement of agriculture as serving to an advisory board.
- Need to be more supportive and active, feel we can and should do more to help the department as a whole.
- From reading the strategic plan the problems are fixable. The bad news is that it is going to take work and it is going to take time. Getting the information out there and the complaints is the first piece fixing the problem is the next step.

Poultry I- Michael Levensgood:

- One-Day Workshops Address Farm Succession.
- The University of Maryland Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREC) is partnering with the Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI) and the University of Maryland Extension to host a series of one-day farm succession workshops around Maryland.
- Five winter workshops are split into two series designed around the idea that the succession process requires financial planning, communication, and a general understanding of business planning and estate planning tools.
- This first series of workshops, "Transferring the Farm to the Next Generation," includes two workshop dates and features speakers covering business planning, communication, and estate planning tools.
- This series will discuss business planning techniques, attached forested land, estate planning, tax basics, and more. A Dorchester County workshop, at Eastern Shore Hospital Center, will happen January 13, and a Cecil County workshop will take place January 15 at Calvert Grange Hall.
- Perdue, BioEnergy DevCo announce anaerobic digestion partnership Bioenergy DevCo announced it has entered a 20-year partnership with Perdue Farms for the supply of organic material from Perdue processing facilities as well as the purchase and management of the Perdue AgriRecycle organic soil composting facility near Seaford, Del.
- Under the terms of the agreement with Perdue Farms, BDC will purchase the existing composting facility and operate it while working within the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and Sussex County permit process to construct an anaerobic digester.
- The proposed facility will be capable of processing a range of organic material from local poultry farmers and processors including Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF), hatchery byproducts and poultry litter. In addition to the production of natural gas, the process creates a virtually odor-free digestant, a natural soil amendment.
- China reopens to chicken imported from the U.S.
- On Nov. 14, the USDA and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative announced China has lifted its ban on poultry imports from the United States. A joint statement by the National

Chicken Council, the National Turkey Federation and USA Poultry and Egg Export Council hailed the move, saying it "represents a significant opportunity for U.S. chicken and turkey producers."

- Layouts continue to be longer than normal on Delmarva. The building of new houses is just about complete from what was on the books.

Turf- Tom Warpinski:

- Overall sod growers had a strong sales year. Challenging weather added a great deal of headaches.
- Very wet spring and summer followed by a 2 month drought in early Fall.
- Fall seedlings are a bit behind due to lack of timely rains.
- Sod supply is on the tight side and will continue to be until mid-May when warm weather returns and drought damaged areas are given time to fill back in.
- Disease and fungus pressure have subsided but quite a bit of damage and growth setback has been experienced by growers.
- Lawn care operators had a nice dry spell in September to catch up on mowing and lawn renovations. Mowing and fertilizing are now done for the year.
- The Maryland Turf Grass Conference and Trade Show was held at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center on December 10, 2019. A great trade show with many educational seminars put together by the Maryland Turf Grass Council and the University of Maryland.
- November 22, I attended the F-3 Fall Symposium on saltwater intrusion and its impact on agriculture. A very well attended discussion. I thought it would focus on sub-surface ground water intrusion, but they mostly discussed surface intrusion. Most impacted areas so far are lower Eastern Shore properties adjacent to tidal waters. Seems research is somewhat focused on engineering salt tolerant crop plants. It was a very interesting topic.
- We may want to consider inviting the lead speaker, Kate Tully, who is the Assistant Professor of Agricultural Ecology at UMD, to give us a presentation here at one of our Ag Commission meetings.
- More information about roundup and the safety of roundup need to be addressed with the public.

Veterinary- Dr. John Brooks:

- Infectious diseases and outbreaks in the state of Maryland have been quiet in the area of veterinary medicine.
- Now moving to winter season dairy farmers will look toward respiratory conditions based on their housing for their calves.
- Poultry is always concerned with changes in humidity and moisture.
- Right now, in the state veterinary medicine and those commodities are pretty quiet.
- As we move forward and continue to develop new breeds that are better productive and disease resistant, we lose and have lost a lot of diversity in livestock over the years. It has threatened our food supply to the point where we have lost over 25% of livestock breeds along with 75% poultry breeds that are leading to extinction.
- If there is a highly pathogenic bug that hits one of these new breeds you may have a susceptible pandemic which will have a huge impact across the spectrum.
- Studies in England on a new breed of poultry that is high path resistant for AI.
- 196 areas nationally that have a shortage of food animal veterinarians.
- Average debt load for graduating veterinarian is \$167 thousand and with high debt load is an increasing suicide rate in young veterinarians. We are continuing to try and approve our programs and get down to local level to support young veterinarians coming into practice and help manage their life.

- Fires and deforestation tend to cause a greater concentration of our wild animal population which increases potential for zoonotic disease to be exposed to the human population.
- A guy in Germany just died as a result of his dog licking him in the face. There was an organism that is commonly found in the mouth of a dog and it rarely causes any issues but in the rare incidence it can cause death.
- USDA Aphis has postponed regulation changes for the NPIP Program such as creating new castles disease clean-up program.

General Updates:

- The biggest challenge to implementation of the farm bill is funding.
- Recently went through entire reorganization of USDA including standup of new business center.
- All of the administrative people, HR, budget have been centralized in the FPAC business center.
- Through this whole process they lost a lot of people, HR personal.
- It is challenging to get people hired because of the time required to do background checks and training.
- Looking for opportunities to partner and utilize any available funding available.
- Trying to bring in staff which takes anywhere from 18 to 24 months in training.
- Try to manage expectations is one way that we can help.
- There is a systematic delay and new rules that can affect approval of specific funds.
- There are early approval/start waivers that can be filled out for some practices.
- The difficulty in filling in the positions is the whole process to get a selectee, the internal process to pick/decide on a candidate takes tremendous amount of time around 2-3 months.
- USA jobs is the centralized website that people can sign up and find opportunities for jobs.
- Recommended to make a video for each of the programs in the farm bill to show what the programs can do.
- Help the farmers feel more knowledgeable about each of the programs and practices.
- It was decided to have Elizabeth Hill as the representative for the Ag commission on the MALPF board.

Steve Connelly:

- The house democratic leadership in the white house came to an agreement on the US, Mexico and Canada free trade act. They signed an agreement in Mexico City and the president sent over the paperwork to move it through the house.
- Canada is Maryland and US agricultures number 1 trade partner and Mexico is our number 2 trade partner.
- Aphis has a lot of control of imports and exports in Mexico.
- There are opportunities in Canada but areas such as Quebec are going to be more difficult with them trying to be self-sufficient and slightly stand offish.
- Sign up deadline for the dairy program is Friday the 13th.
- Dr. Michael Oodian new state vet.

Kelly Dudeck Grow and Fortify:

- The grape harvests this year was great over 1000 acres of grapes planted.
- If the grape harvest was bad the year before you will see a lot of Rose the year after.
- About 50-60 acres of hops in the ground with no complaints about the weather and a good harvest this year.
- A lot of county level work around planning and zoning and not knowing where to put a lot of the guys we are working with. If they are on a farm looking to diversify into something value

added or looking to start a new process such as food processing. Need to expand and have trouble finding where to go because they don't know how to classify them.

- There are forms and seminars for interest in the Hemp industry.

Julie Oberg:

- Everyone received a copy of the strategic plan from the MD Department of Agriculture.
- First meeting of the new soil health advisory committee
- The committee identifies and promotes agriculture practices to improve soil productivity by enhancing capacity and holding nutrients.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 1st Keith Ohlinger and 2nd by Dr. John Brooks.

Respectfully Submitted by Jessica O'Sullivan.