



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 Young Farmers Advisory Board

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

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MARYLAND YOUNG FARMER ADVISORY BOARD

Working Minutes

April 30th, 2025

In-Person Location: 50 Harry S. Truman Pkwy, Annapolis MD 21401

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81281815453?pwd=tWrDtieUsgBlW9mM3mkfFwdoCNXgIS.1>

Meeting ID: 812 8181 5453 Passcode: 565701

Present:

Joe Milone, Commerce
Ella Burrier, FFA
Katelyn Bullock, FFA
Abby Efland, FFA
Amy Roe
Dr. Ebony Jenkins
Miranda Rounds

Andrew Amoruso, DNR
Charlie Sasscer
Jenell Eck McHenry
Martin Proulx
Taylor Lewis
JT Albright
Kelly Stevens

Absent:

Emily Wright
Edward Goodman
Tyler Mercure
Brandon Boyer
Nora Crist

Mason Grahame
Harry Huntley
Tyler Rill
Gale Livingstone

MDA Staff:

Harrison Palmer, Executive Secretary
Michael Calkins
Aidan Boline
Hans Schmidt

Guests:

Welcome:

The April, 2025, Young Farmers Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair, at 10:09 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the January 2025 minutes made by Joe Milone seconded by JT Albright.

Young Farmer Reports:

- Jennell Eck McHenry, Chair
 - o Beef sales are continuing to stay high
 - o EPA appointed Amy Van Blarcom-Lackey as Regional Administrator for the Mid-Atlantic
 - She comes with a background in conservation and dairy in Pennsylvania.
 - o USDA buyouts will have potential impacts on young farmers as the agency shrinks, and their mission is refocused.
 - o Continuing to plant into drought conditions, predictions for grain prices are decreasing. Coupled with fertilizer markets in limbo and prices increasing for imports with the proposed tariffs, young farmers are put at higher risk given their inability to absorb price fluctuations.
- Martin Proulx & Aidan Boline, MDA Value Added Agriculture
 - o Continuing to work on the statewide guidance document for value added agricultural operations, visiting with counties to meet with their planning and zoning officials, environmental health officials, and other enforcement agencies that interact with agriculture.
- Joe Milone, Maryland Dept. of Commerce
 - o Grant programs recently announced recipients for;
 - [Winery and Vineyard program](#)
 - [Alcohol Manufacturing Promotion Fund](#)
- Andrew Amoruso, MD DNR
 - o Currently working through spring fire season
 - o Finished spring tree planting due to drier conditions for accessing properties
 - Afforestation projects have been the primary focus of the 5 Million Tree initiative, prioritizing underserved landowners (Ex., Chestertown, Cambridge, etc.)
 - The 5 Million Tree initiative has continue to be geared towards private landowners and not considering taking public agricultural land. Some parkland was purchased with the intent of planting more trees, but not agricultural land.
- Abby Effland, President; Katelyn Burrier, Maryland FFA
 - o Continuing chapter visits throughout the end of the school year.
 - o Noticing trends that magnet-based high school programs have higher involvement with FFA programs

- Concluded the largest spring judging event in Maryland FFA recent history, looking forward to Maryland State Convention in June.
- State Officers are concerned with potential closing chapters in Northern Maryland, but excited about the growth in St. Mary's County.
 - Certain counties place less value in agricultural programs due to a lack of support from the administration, leading to fewer prepared students entering the agricultural workforce.
- JT Albright
 - Baltimore County Office of Agriculture is currently hiring 2 positions
 - Baltimore County solar bills are currently in limbo pending the SB931 signature from the Governor.
 - Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick County Farm Bureaus, as well as Maryland Farm Bureau, have hired a legal team to serve as an intervenor in the PPRP transmission line proposal through Northern Maryland.
- Dr. Ebony Jenkins
 - Currently in the infancy stages of engaging with church programs and introducing agriculture and conservation through faith based institutions.
- Amy Rowe
 - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is slowing in commercial flocks as migratory bird populations leave the area.
 - More rain is continuing to come to the lower shore, drought conditions are decreasing
 - Mortgage rates are slowly dropping, introducing new opportunities for young farmers to enter the mark place
 - Horizon Farm Credit
 - Johanna Rohrer was recently hired as a YBS (Young, Beginning, Small) specialist
 - Horizon Farm Credit is continuing to invest in more YBS specific loan officers
 - Dillon Way was recently hired for Colonial Farm Credit to direct YBS programming
 - [FSA Youth Loans](#) and [Farm Credit Youth Loans](#) present opportunities for young farmers to build credit through financing their 4H and FFA projects under the age of 18.
- Kelly Stevens
 - Noticing HPAI trending slower, layouts are shorter.
- Taylor Lewis
 - Relatively normal spring for urban agriculture
 - Federal funding challenges have forced farmers to pivot in their support services
 - Nonprofit funding has frozen, so more urban farmers are turning to independent consultants for assistance

- Specific programs such as EQIP and LFPFA have large impacts on urban and small farmers, shrinking staff numbers at USDA has farmers concerned for their ability to receive timely technical assistance.
- Miranda Rounds
 - Garrett County is seeing increased solar and wind pressure from developers
 - Spring planting is underway, calving season has been strong for most farmers
 - Recent derecho has caused extensive damage through it's path with trees and barns blown over
 - MALPF Funding cuts will have an impact on the number of acres preserved in the State, leaving more opportunity for development
- Charlie Sasscer
 - Spring season planting has been strong in Southern Maryland despite dry conditions
 - Hoping the old adage is true; "plant into dust and your bins will bust"
 - Spring forage has begun to green up and produce.

Board Discussion:

- Statewide Survey
 - During the July 2024 meeting, the board moved to split the funding for the survey 50/50 to spend on incentives and promotion. Executive Leadership of the board invested in customized 26 Yeti tumblers and 1 Yeti Cooler. Leadership moved forward with the production of 1,000 post cards with the survey advertisement for disbursement at conferences, trade shows, etc., and sponsored the Taste of Maryland Agriculture to broadcast the survey as well.
 - At the January meeting, Amy Rowe motioned to close the survey on March 7th, second by Andrew Amoruso and approved by the Board.
 - Miranda Rounds then motioned to disperse half of the Yeti cups on January 30th, then the remaining cups at the next Board meeting, this motion was second by Amy Rowe and approved by the Board.
 - The Executive Secretary used an online randomization software to select 16 names from the list of 400+ who submitted the survey as of 1/30/2025 and will ship the cups to those selected winners.
 - Upon closing of the survey in March there were 532 total responses. The previous winners were removed from the pool of potential cup-recipients, and all other names were entered into an online randomization software. 16 more names were selected for Yeti Cups, and 2 were selected for the Yeti Cooler (pending that at least one lived in Maryland).
 - The names were motioned to be approved as winners by Katelyn, second by JT Albright. All were in favor.
 - The Executive Secretary along with the Chair and Vice Chair will proceed with the planning of the Stakeholder Engagement Event to take place in July 2025.

MDA Staff Update:

- Michael Calkins, Assistant Secretary for Plant Industries and Pest Management
 - o Spotted lanternfly is emerging in Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore
 - o USDA is backing away from spotted lanternfly treatment reimbursements
 - o Mosquito and Black Fly treatments are starting, there are seasonal job openings for the Mosquito Control section at MDA
- Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation
 - o Maryland Ag Cost Share program was not funded through the current state budget but is working off of \$10M of carryover. No pins were lost.
 - o The Cover Crop program was not cut. Resource Conservation will host a webinar in the coming months to make farmers aware of upcoming changes – including the scaling back of the program.
 - o Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act was passed, establishing the Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) program.
 - o The Chesapeake Bay Program established a new Agricultural Advisory Group, Barb Glenn and Amanda Cather were appointed to represent Maryland farmers.

Executive Secretary's Updates:

- 2025 Meeting Dates
 - o The board set the meeting dates for the remainder of the year.
 - 4/16/2025
 - 7/16/2025
- The Maryland Agricultural Commission will be pursuing the creation of a statewide definition for agriculture; Young Farmers will have a seat at the table.
- HB262/SB240 – Maryland Agricultural Commission and Young Farmers – passed, formally updating the membership of the Maryland Agricultural Commission, dissolving the Young Farmers Advisory Board, adding a Young Farmer seat on the Commission and granting that Young Farmer a Committee on Young Farmers to replace the Board. This new law takes effect on October 1st, 2025. The Board will meet one more time in July, then transition to the Committee on Young Farmers beginning October 1st and will follow the schedule of the Commission Committees.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Abby Effland, second by Joe Milone at 11:24 am.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary