



**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
March 13th, 2024**

Present:

Chris Rhodes
Dr. Marianne Bailey
O'Malley
Paula Linthicum (Virtual)
Frank Allnut
Stefanie Reiser (Virtual)
Kelly Lewis

Joe Dymek
Hunter Pusey
Johnny Shockley (Virtual)
Raj Kathuria
Tom Mullineaux
Levi Sellers (Virtual)
Amy Crone (Virtual)
Dr. Darren Jarboe

Cliff Newsome
Ann Merryman (Virtual)
Kelly Dudeck
Far Nasir (Virtual)
Sean Hough
John Murphy (Virtual)

Absent:

Gordon Kretser
Kellie Hinkle
Russell Shlagel
Rachel Lipman

MDA Staff:

Sec. Kevin Atticks
Rachel Jones
Jessica Hackett

Hans Schmidt
Cassie Shirk
Harrison Palmer
Heather Barthel

Martin Proulx
Michael Calkins
Elizabeth Hoffman
Alisha Mulkey

Guests:

John Harline, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
Scott Warner, Mid Shore Regional Council
Dean Moises Kairo, University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Katie Stevens, Frederick County Office of Agriculture
Dave Nemazie, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
Patty Shreves, Maryland Rural Water Association
Courtney Hoff, United States Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding
Allison Roe, Maryland Resource Based Industry Development Corporation
Emma Jagoz, Moon Valley Farm
Zach Evans, Mountaire Farms
Mark Townsend, University of Maryland Extension
Jenell Eck McHenry, Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board
Steve McHenry, Maryland Resource Based Industry Development Corporation

Call to Order:

The March 2024 Maryland Agricultural Commission meeting was called to order by Kelly Dudeck, Chair, at 10:07 am.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the February 2024 meeting minutes was made by Tom Mullineaux, second by Joe Dymek at 10:08 AM

Presentation from University of Maryland Extension – Mark Townsend

Presentation from Maryland Rural Water Association – Patty Shreves

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

- **MAEF**
 - Scholarship applications will be received through March 25. Applications are available on the MAEF website.
 - LET'S GRO Together garden grants open through March 25. Applications are available on the MAEF website.
 - New Showcase theme will be centered around A Day In Your Life (with agricultural products).
 - Working on a new fundraiser in the Central Maryland area with a creamery partner.
 - Still looking for Mobile Lab teachers, Showcase attendants, reliable local haulers, and safe places around the state for "layovers" for the Labs and Showcase. Contact: Susanne Richards: susanne@maefonline.com or (410) 430-2613.
 - The World Under Your Feet: A professional development workshop for high school science teachers, is planned for July 29-31 at the Institute of Applied Agriculture in College Park.
 - MAEF continues to monitor the Blueprint rollout and will be working with MSDE to ensure the Certified Professional Horticulturalist (CPH) certification remains an approved certification, and will be working on additional certification opportunities
- **FFA**
 - Application for the two scholarships that are offered through the Maryland FFA Foundation, the Wiley & Carrie Griffith Scholarship and the UMCP Past State Officer Matching Scholarships are now being accepted. Please share this information with FFA graduating seniors who plan to pursue higher education in

an agriculture career. Applications can be obtained from the student's FFA Advisor. The deadline for applying is April 1, 2024. Email the completed application and requested documents to Terrie Shank, at tshank@maefonline.com or print and mail them to Terrie's attention at: Maryland FFA Association, P.O. Box 564, Funkstown, MD 21734.

- The Maryland FFA held an Advocacy Day in Annapolis on Wednesday, February 28th. We had 140 FFA Members and 30 Advisors in attendance. FFA members learned about advocacy from Harrison Palmer, MDA; Tyler Hough, MFB, Tyler Majchrzak, Horizon Farm Credit and Dr. April Miller, Delegate from Frederick County. The FFA members toured the State House, attended the House and Senate legislative sessions, met with their local legislators, and attended Committee meetings. FFA members were honored to have Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks, Deputy Secretary Steve Connely, and Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk attend our luncheon and share with the members. It was a very positive experience, and we look forward to holding the event again next year.

Agribusiness- Thomas Mullineaux:

- Can you imagine how much adrenalin is flowing through the mind and body of a Nascar driver just before the Green Flag falls?
- That's about the situation with growers and fertilizer custom application and spreading company personnel there is right NOW waiting on the ground to dry out!
- Agri-Businesses are ready with urea and Nitrogen and herbicides. AND the wheat is READY!
- So much for the Rain aches. July and August will be great. Keep saying that.
- Retail garden centers are opening, some this week. They are well stocked. Lawn and garden fertilizer and lime seems to be moving well on sunny days.
- Feed, hay and other items are moving very well.
- My very unscientific survey revealed that Grower Prepay for Spring 2024 inputs was better than expected considering commodity and input prices.
- Beef, specifically Dairy beef is having a real positive couple of years. Hog market down, beef market up..... Imagine that.
- But chickens just keep just keep on clucking.

Agritourism - Kelly Dudeck:

- No report.

Aquaculture - Johnny Shockley:

- **2nd Annual Walk on Annapolis** was Thursday, March 7th, sponsored by Chesapeake Bay Foundation Oyster Alliance to educate and advocate lawmakers on behalf of all

Chesapeake Bay Oyster stakeholders. Lawmakers and others, nearly 400 were treated to raw and steamed oysters from local aquaculture farmers on the Bay and coastal Bay.

- Prototype of solar-powered oyster production system to operate on Hoopers Island Oyster Company's lease in 2024:

- A prototype of Solar Oysters' solar-powered oyster production system will operate on Hoopers Island Oyster Company's lease in 2024. Photo by AJ Metcalf, courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.



- Solar Oysters, a sustainable aquaculture technology producer, is partnering with Blue Oyster Environmental (BOE), a vertically integrated oyster aquaculture company. The collaboration aims to transform aquaculture technology by using solar energy for oyster production and to enhance environmental sustainability and efficiency.
- The Solar Oyster Production System (SOPS) is estimated to produce up to 200,000 oysters in a 0.02-acre space. Traditional oyster farms often require multiple acres to produce a similar amount. The SOPS prototype has solar panels that rotate 575 oyster cages on five ladders to a depth of 16 feet. This increases the oysters' access to varying food availability, dissolved oxygen and salinity and exposes them to sunlight, which can inhibit biofouling. The SOPS technology includes a spray wash system powered by solar energy.

- **“HOPE ON THE HALF-SHELL” report says oysters can fight climate change in the Chesapeake Bay.** [Hope on the Half Shell - Chesapeake Bay Foundation \(cbf.org\)](https://www.cbf.org/2023/04/12/hope-on-the-half-shell-report-says-oysters-can-fight-climate-change-in-the-chesapeake-bay/)
- **OYSTER SOUTH**, an association of oyster farmers from Texas to North Carolina. The annual conference was held in New Orleans, LA 2/27-3/2. Blue Oyster/HIOC co-sponsored this event and had an opportunity to interact with oyster farmers and other industry partners from around the world on issues related to the expansion of oyster aquaculture across the Gulf and southeastern states.

Bio-Fuel - Rajneesh Kathuria:

- ContinuumAg Topsoil Webinar – Cover Crops and Carbon Intensity (invite will be shared with commission)
 - Tuesday, April 2nd at 1:00 pm EST

Consumer – Kellie Hinkle:

- No report.

Dairy I – Vacant:

Dairy II- Vacant:

Direct Farm Market - Amy Crone:

- Most farm stands and farmers markets are still closed for the winter season; many will open in April.
- There is a list of the year-round farmers markets here and you find lists here for inspiration of what's in season before you shop.
- Winter CSAs are accepting members; they are listed on Maryland's Best for folks to find one near them and inquire if they offer options year-round.
- Applications are open for SMADC's Maryland Market Money program for the 2024 season.
- Conference season is in full swing; see list below.
- Grants / Opportunities / Conferences (in chronological order):
- MDA Farmers Market Conference: 3/12/2024
- MDA announced the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program, with applications due on 3/15/24
- Ongoing challenges for this sector: processing dates, weather, labor

Equine (Horse Breeding) - Ann Merryman:

- No report.

Farm Bureau - Paula Linthicum:

- *Legislative:*
- MDFB has been following 140 of the over 2500 bills this session.
- Bills MDFB **opposes** that would make farming in Maryland more difficult:
 - **SB0193(HB0357): Cage-free egg mandate**
 - **Would ban** Maryland farmers from having caged-egg operations. Would mandate costly cage-free eggs negatively impacting consumer choice in egg purchases and negatively impacting a sector of Maryland agriculture's free market economy restricting farmers' production methods.
 - **HB1190: Pesticides PFAS**
 - Prohibition to sell or use pesticide with PFAS chemicals labeled as an active ingredient. This attempts to remove tools from agriculture's toolbox. MDFB does not support regulation concerning PFAS without conclusive scientific data.
- Priority bills MDFB **supports**:
 - **SB0367(HB048): Deer Management Programs**
 - **Critical funding to remediate deer and allow counties that have successfully hosted past deer management programs to continue their efforts.**

- Bills MDFB is **monitoring**:
 - *HB0993*: Maryland Climate Week
 - It is important for this bill to view MD agriculture and farmers positively. Ensuring the climate change narrative is pro-agriculture to help Marylanders understand role as environmental stewards. MDFB urges curriculum inclusiveness that teaches about agricultural practices and environmental education that includes ag education.
 - *HB1515*: Sales & Use Tax
 - Bill would create a 5% tax on professional services farmers use to meet the standards set by our state. We look to ensure this wouldn't jeopardize the financial stability of farmers concerning their taxes on agricultural-related services. MDFB supports the continued exemption of agricultural items and related services from the state sales tax
- *Agriculture Education*:
 - Committee Chair Barb Glenn glennbarb6@gmail.com & MDFB Staff member Kendall Abruzzese kabruzzo@marylandfb.org
- **MDFB's top policy priorities for 2024** include right-to-farm, agriculture education, and wildlife management. We support a robust Agriculture education program in the state and this has been the top priority for a few years.
- **2024 MDFB Young Farmer and Next Generation Summit at the Annual Convention 12/7/24**
 - Planning has begun and the goal is to increase impact and value for young farmers, MDFB Ag Ambassadors, and youth leaders from FFA, 4-H, and MANRRS. We are brainstorming with key industry sponsors now, so let us know if you are interested in being involved from the start for 2024. We wish to modernize the event to engage the audience in peer dialogue, and with agriculture leaders in industry, government, academia and beyond. Attendees will build strong partnerships and connections among youth from FFA, 4-H and MANRRS, young professionals, and Young Farmers of MDFB. Participants will network, share successes, and strategize together on efforts to lead and amplify MD Agriculture into the future. The event is hosted by Young Farmers Committee and Agriculture Education and Extension Committee. If you know of interested FFA, 4-H or MANRRS youth who would like to participate in planning, please let Kendall know. MDFB invites our key allies and industry sponsors to get involved now! Let us know if you are interested in being involved from the start for 2024.

Field Crops – Chris Rhodes:

- Spring has officially arrived, and sprayers are out in the fields.
- Farmers have been taking advantage of the early topdressing opportunity that MDA granted in February.

- So far, it has been a wet spring.

Food Processing – Vacant:

Forestry – Hunter Pusey:

- As of this writing, the 2024 Maryland General Assembly is less than one month away before adjourning, Sine Die until January 8, 2025. This remaining “one-month window” can witness many-an-unforeseen-change in envisioned policy as State lawmakers start trading votes; meaning, bills introduced in January can take on a whole new look come March. Those involved in the legislative process must remain especially vigilant during this unpredictable, remaining 30-day period because of outcome uncertainty.
- The 2024 Session has focused mainly on budget challenges as well as measures on affordable housing and public safety. Like other states, Maryland benefited from unprecedented windfall b/c of federal pandemic aid in recent years. But now Maryland is facing a projected structural deficit of \$761 million in the next fiscal year. That is expected to balloon to about \$2.7 billion in fiscal year 2029, largely due to inflationary pressures, sagging revenue sources and rising costs of a K-12 education funding reform law. In mid-March 2024, the Comptroller is expected to issue a revision in projected fiscal year 2025 revenues...rumors abound projected revenues will decline further.
- FROM A 2024 FORESTRY POLICY-RELATED PERSPECTIVE, OUR FOCUS IS MAINLY 2-FOLD:
 - FIRST: Convincing the 2024 General Assembly to reject the Moore Administration’s proposal – embodied in the 2024 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act – to reduce the annual appropriation to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund (“WIF”) by 50%; that is, from a \$1 million annual appropriation to \$500,000 effective in fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025) and thereafter. If approved, WIF would be \$ crippled.
 - SECOND: Convincing the 2024 General Assembly to direct the Department of Assessments and Taxation (“DAT”), along with the Department of Natural Resources, to revisit the existing definition of “entirely woodland” parcels when such parcels are converted to non-forested use, thus making them subject to the agricultural land transfer tax. Revenues derived from agricultural land transfer tax imposed upon the conversion of “entirely woodland” parcels are credited to WIF but capped at \$200,000 annually. However, only 3 times in the last 27 years (1986 through 2023) has this \$200,000 cap been reached. Why? AFI thinks that DAT is doing something wrong in its calibration to the fiscal detriment of the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund and proposes a legislative remedy.
- Allegany Wood Products in West Virginia had an abrupt closure, hindering the forestry industry in Western Maryland.

Hemp- Matthew 'Levi' Sellers:

- Industrial Hemp
 - PA Ag. Dept. recently adopted a commonsense approach to regulating hemp, grown for fiber and grain, separate from floral hemp, typically grown for extracts. Both are visibly different in their cultivation methods.
 - Growers of hemp fiber or grain crops in Pennsylvania can now apply for performance-based sampling that allows them to forgo compliance sampling if they qualify and grow certain varieties.
 - This is available for renewing growers who meet the following requirements:
 - have had a minimum of two consecutive years growing hemp in Pennsylvania with all hemp lots meeting THC compliance requirements of the department
 - have had THC compliance sampling and testing using a PDA inspector or certified sampling agent, and a laboratory on the PDA Registry of Approved Laboratories for Compliance Testing
 - are not currently under a corrective action plan
 - grow fiber, grain or seed that has previously been grown in Pennsylvania with a minimum of three lots and has a history of less than 10% noncompliance in the commonwealth (a list of low-risk fiber, grain and seed varieties are provided by PDA's Hemp Program), or are growing a fiber, grain or seed that has been certified by Health Canada, AOSCA, OECD or another organization that approves hemp varieties for seed certification and is not included on the PDA list of prohibited varieties
 - Growers approved for the performance-based sampling do not have to conduct compliance sampling on the low-risk or certified fiber or grain varieties for a single growing season.
 - To improve the adoption of hemp grown for fiber and grain, as an alternative rotational crop, the MDA could establish similar regulatory changes as seen in PA and in former legislative efforts by the MD hemp industry during the 2023 session. These changes would not violate the USDA approved MD hemp plan as just witnessed in PA.
 - <https://www.farmprogress.com/hemp/hemp-sampling-protocol-changed-in-pennsylvania>
- Hemp For Batteries
 - In December '23 the Wisconsin Battery Company announced the acquisition of 17 acres in Portage, Wis., where it will build a new manufacturing plant to develop hemp carbon batteries as an alternative for lithium ion batteries. Wisconsin Battery Company focuses on research, development and manufacturing of clean, renewable energy storage alternatives.
 - The company said these hemp carbon batteries will offer improved energy density, longer lifespan, reduced environmental impact and utilize domestically

produced raw material thus addressing the national security risks associated with global lithium sourcing.

- This is a huge step forward for the hemp industry that will create more agricultural employment opportunities, increased market demand for raw hemp-derived agricultural commodities and increasing farmer interest in producing these raw materials.
 - <https://www.no-tillfarmer.com/articles/13042-wisconsin-company-building-manufacturing-plant-to-turn-hemp-into-batteries>

Horticulture – Vacant:

Livestock- Sean Hough:

- Maryland Pork Producers Association holding their first ever show-pig online sale on March 27th.
 - Opportunity for 4-H kids to get into swine showmanship.
- The pork industry is very concerned about California’s Prop 12 and the impact and influence that it will have on farmers on our side of the country in Maryland.
 - Seeing a connection with the proposed cage-free chicken legislation that has been proposed for 2024.
- Many processors within the state are already booked for the remainder of the year, there exists an exuberant strain on processors and butchers throughout the region.
- Swine industry has had some reports of Strep in Maryland and Pennsylvania that they are monitoring.
- Swine set the record (per dollar value) set a record for pork exports thus far this year.
- Beef & lamb exports are down but the prices are up, dealing with a nationwide supply issue.

Nursery I- J. Kelly Lewis:

- Little to report this month. Most if not all nursery operations are busy with harvesting field grown plant material, shipping field and container grown material and lining out or planting young, propagated nursery stock for future harvest. The weather has been relatively good and on the mild side with what seems to be somewhat typical rain.
- Supply chain issues are reduced this year compared to previous years. After several years of substantial increases, prices have level out. Nationally the cost of producing nursery and greenhouse crops rose by 60% since 2007, and tracked expenses rose by 9.5% from 2021 to 2022. In 2023 they level to .05% higher in 2023 than 2022. (As reported by Dr. Charlie Hall Chief Economist for AmericanHort). This leveling has been welcomed, although the market makes it very challenging to adjust the price for selling wholesale nursery crops at the rate of the increased cost to produce those crops.

- Below is a list of up-coming industry events taken from the University of Maryland Extension IPM Report:
 - **March 26 - 29, 2024** IPM Scouts' Training
 - Location: Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Ellicott City, MD
 - **April 19-20, 2024** Youth Arboriculture Career Expo
 - Location: Gallaudet University
 - For more info: 202-826-6314
 - **May 22, 2024** MAA Pest Walk
 - Location: CMREC, Ellicott City, MD
 - **June 4, 2024** MNLGA Program: Focus on Garden Centers
 - Location: Ladew Gardens, Monkton, MD
 - **June 5 and 6, 2024** (previously scheduled for February/March 2024) Biological Control Conference for Greenhouses, Nurseries, and Landscapes
 - Location: Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Ellicott City, MD
 - **June 20, 2024** UMD Extension and MNLGA Technology Field Day for Nurseries
 - Location: Ruppert Nurseries, Laytonsville, MD
 - **September 17 and 18, 2024** (rescheduled from March) Cut Flower Program
 - Location: Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Ellicott City, MD and several tour locations in Howard County.
 - **October 9, 2024** MNLGA Retail Day
 - Location: Homestead Gardens, Davidsonville, MD

Nursery II- John Murphy:

- Tracking legislation on the MNLGA and keeping members up to date.
- Monitoring legislation dealing with:
 - Sales tax concerns
 - Minimizing out-of-state imports of invasive plants coming into Maryland
 - Monitoring PFAS

Organic Farming – Emma Jagoz:

- Resources
 - 2022 Ag Census Data out
 - Dollars in organic product sales way up for Maryland for 2022 (\$51,253,000) compared to the 2017 census (\$30,402,000)
 - Fewer farms and fewer acres in organic production and organic transition
- Opportunities
 - [Transition to Organic](#) event hosted by University of Maryland Extension, March 19 8a-2p at Chesapeake College (free!)

- Challenges
 - New regulations for organic certification coming through the MDA to be effective Apr 1, 2024
 - Application for organic farms is very different this year than ever before

| Item | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland |
|--|---------|--------|----------|-----------|--------|----------|
| VALUE OF SALES OF CERTIFIED OR EXEMPT ORGANICALLY PRODUCED COMMODITIES | | | | | | |
| Total organic product sales | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 692 | 167 | 172 | 19 | 425 | 113 |
| 2017 | 676 | 105 | 184 | 23 | 552 | 117 |
| \$1,000, 2022 | 191,826 | 70,078 | 36,794 | 8,054 | 49,015 | 51,253 |
| 2017 | 95,193 | 39,392 | 13,961 | 7,184 | 60,027 | 30,438 |
| By value of sales: | | | | | | |
| \$1 to \$4,999 | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 57 | 18 | 45 | 12 | 120 | 18 |
| 2017 | 87 | 14 | 65 | 8 | 163 | 12 |
| \$1,000, 2022 | 80 | 31 | 62 | 19 | 237 | 46 |
| 2017 | 142 | 25 | 108 | 25 | 373 | 36 |
| \$5,000 or more | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 635 | 149 | 127 | 7 | 305 | 95 |
| 2017 | 589 | 91 | 119 | 15 | 389 | 105 |
| \$1,000, 2022 | 191,847 | 70,047 | 36,732 | 8,036 | 48,779 | 51,208 |
| 2017 | 95,051 | 39,367 | 13,853 | 7,159 | 59,654 | 30,402 |
| TYPE OF PRODUCTION | | | | | | |
| USDA National Organic Program certified organic production | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 747 | 154 | 147 | 14 | 412 | 106 |
| 2017 | 758 | 106 | 163 | 19 | 535 | 111 |
| USDA National Organic Program organic production exempt from certification | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 36 | 27 | 45 | 11 | 57 | 17 |
| 2017 | 27 | 11 | 64 | 10 | 86 | 23 |
| Acres transitioning into USDA National Organic Program organic production | | | | | | |
| farms, 2022 | 97 | 33 | 53 | 1 | 18 | 24 |
| 2017 | 155 | 43 | 90 | 13 | 56 | 38 |

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2022 Census of Agriculture - State Data
 USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

United States 621

Poultry I- Zach Evans:

- Delmarva Chicken Association held a DAF town hall at Worwic Community College on 3/12.
 - Great representation from the public, the farming community, industry groups and partners. Shows a lot of progress from the conversations that were being held 6 months ago now that there has been more education and communication on both sides.
- Continuing to work with legislators, MDA, and stakeholders to make the necessary changes to the proposed DAF bill to make sure it works for all parties.
- Events:
 - Poultry Grower Expo in Princess Anne with UMES, DCA, UME, University of Delaware
 - April 3rd, 2024
 - Poultry Industry Grower Barbecue at the Delaware State Fairgrounds
 - June 5th, 2024

Poultry II- Far Nasir:

- No report.

Related Services I – Frank Allnutt:

- The American Chestnut Foundation in cooperation with the MD Chestnut Council and other cooperating states will be planting a replicated planting this April of 885

seeds/site. Seeds are selections from best X best program. The four states are MD, VA, WV, and PA. Seeds are from sources in TN, GA, VA, VT, and PA. The planting in MD will be at the University's Farm at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center (WMREC).

Related Services II – Stefanie Reiser:

- No report.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome:

- Maryland Grangers will be assisting the Maryland FFA as they conduct their state judging contests at Westminster High School on April 13th. FFA members will participate in 7 -8 contests as a chapter and individual competition. Every one of the members has always shown pride in themselves, their schools and FFA. We look forward to helping with the state FFA convention at Wisp Resorts.
- Maryland agriculture and aquaculture are still the number one income industries in the state. Most of the proposed senate and house bills seem to be increasing reports and liabilities to hinder it. There seems to be widening disconnect with agriculture. The Maryland Agriculture Commission and the Maryland Agriculture Counsel need to work together to strengthen the bonds with legislatures. There are no longer any “dumb” farmers who throw seeds and fertilizer on the ground and watch it grow. It will be interesting to see if agriculture is mentioned in the State of the State or the State of the Nation addresses. We realize by the time this report is given the speeches will be history. Will agriculture follow?
- Since 1874 the Maryland Grange has lived by conservative standards in every aspect of life. Agriculture was helped to bind the nation together again. But education, transportation, safety, communication was also concerns that had to be addressed. Today we are still facing these concerns with a population that is not concerned about agriculture. The standards are swinging to liberal viewpoints. Maybe we're not supposed to voice our concerns as a commission, but we can by the organizations we belong to or as individuals.
- So, I'll get down off my grandstand and let you know that shortly (in a couple of months) I will be leaving this fine group. Allen Stiles, vice president, will be my replacement. It has been a pleasure to meet all of you. Will probably be serving 2 more months so don't celebrate yet!

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- The Maryland Turf Council will be opposing House Bill 1190 - Prohibiting, beginning June 1, 2025, a person from selling a pesticide that has PFAS chemicals listed as an active ingredient on the labeling accompanying the pesticide; and prohibiting, beginning December 31, 2025, a person from using a pesticide that has PFAS chemicals listed as an

active ingredient on the labeling.

- A few common PFAS chemicals used currently in the lawn & landscape industry are bifenthrin and prodiamine.

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

- The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has received requests for 994 nutrient management plans and 47% of these have been completed. All the information needed to write nutrient management plans has been received for 65% of the requests and 72% of these have been delivered to farmers.
- LEAD Maryland Class XIII Fellows traveled to Cecil County to participate in Seminar 1 that focused on the horse industry. Class XIII and LEAD Maryland alumni celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program.
- The AgFS Program has 10 positions in various stages of recruitment. Charles County AgFS educator candidates have been selected for initial interviews that will take place March 18 and 19. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and ruminant livestock specialist positions have posted on eTerp and have a best consideration date of March 30. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description has been submitted to human resources and is expected to post later this month or in early April.
- The faculty specialist, ANMP program director best consideration date has been pushed back to April 4 due to a lack of qualified candidates. Nine applicants were interviewed for the five open nutrient management advisor positions in Caroline, Montgomery, Wicomico/Worcester, and Washington Counties, and statewide. Selections will be made later this week.
- AgFS winter educational programming has been completed. Spring field days will start soon.
- Grants
 - Baltimore County 4-H. 2024. Agri-science workshops. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$800.
 - Burk, Amy. 2024. Raise awareness for Maryland animal agriculture through a self-guided walking tour of the ANSC Campus Farm. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$1,000.
 - Frederick County Extension. 2024. Help a Title 1 school participate in hands-on agricultural experiences, learning about grain production, utilization and the importance of grain products. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$999.
 - Institute of Applied Agriculture. 2024. Procure an additional drone for a new course. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$959.
 - Kumar, Hemendra, et al. 2024. Quantifying actual nutrient load reduction in drainage structures. Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology. \$95,560.
 - Maryland 4-H Foundation, Inc. 2024. Growing a Prepared and Sustainable Workforce through the 4-H Internships. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$2,500.

Vegetable – Russell Shlagel:

- Conference and educational season is winding down. It is time to get in the field and implement some of these new practices.
- There are some winter markets that will go through till Spring to a dedicated following of buy local customers. However, we are in that weird in between stage of it getting warmer and people think we should have actual Spring veggies. Sometimes I wonder if all we're doing is setting ourselves up for customer disappointment in March/April.
- Market gardeners in So MD are now planting or have planted peas, beets, onions, radish, carrots etc. Overwintered Spinach looks good, and Tomatoes are being planted in High tunnels with supplemental heat.
- If you use the Farmers Market Nutrition Program don't forget you need to be certified every 3 years. Classes are being offered across the state as well as online. You should consider SNAP and WIC Vouchers to be able to offer more to the food insecure.
- Which brings me to my Pet Peeve of the month. Farmers Markets should require all qualifying vendors to accept WIC vouchers as a mandatory requirement to sell at the market. What is anyone afraid of? Poor people will come to the market?
- The fields are wet but the wind and warmer weather at the end of this week should help dry things out and get farmers on the land.
- Crops appear to be running about 2 weeks ahead of normal. What is normal nowadays?
- I told you in January Spring was around the corner.
- It's official if you're not in the greenhouse what are you doing?
- Last week the bi partisan Agricultural Labor Working Group announced its final report. There are several good ideas that have come out of it with unanimous support. Now the tricky part... implementing it.
- Shoutout to Carol Allen and Plant Science Food Safety Group. They put out a weekly email newsletter and maintain a YouTube channel, The Plant Science Food Safety Group, that is full of good information. If you are a Vegetable or fruit farmer and/or under a food safety plan it's a great resource. Subscribe to it.
- So. MD. Farmers are concerned about the cloud of uncertainty that hovers over the Lothian Grain elevator. The only news seems to be what comes from the Del Marva Farmer newspaper. Some farmers in the region chose to store the fall harvest grain, to defer payments or wait for an upswing in the market. If this operational contract is not worked out, where do they stand with that grain? Will they be forced to sell when they don't want, will they be protected; will they be made whole?
- 3/31 Deadline for Specialty Block Grant
- 4/1 Anne Arundel Young Farmers Equipment Auction
- 4/6 Wye Angus Annual Sale

Veterinary – Dr. Marianne B. O'Malley:

- No report.

Viticulture – Rachel Lipman:

- The news: There is big news in the Maryland Wine industry. One of the major events of the year for the Maryland wine industry is a festival called Wine in the Woods, held at Merriweather.
 - We partner with Howard County every year. It is a partnership that we, as an industry, has had for over 30 years.
 - Howard county decided to break this partnership and hold the event without the MWA (Maryland Wineries Association).
 - As members of the MWA, most wineries are deciding to not attend—as this event was a major source of income for the MWA.
 - It is a huge disappointment to the whole industry that Howard county would act in this manner.
- In terms of vineyards—most wineries are getting to the end of pruning and preparing for bud-break in April/the growing season.
 - For my winery, we just had a massive win at an international wine competition—TEXSOM with 4 of our wines. With one best in show, 2022 Malbec.

Young Farmers Advisory Board – Jenell Eck McHenry

- Young Farmer Survey is still in process of being updated.
- Horizon Farm Credit announced another year of Rise Up program.
- Vice Chair Edwin Goodman attended the Ag Re-Engagement Roundtable in Annapolis.
 - Maryland is meeting its WIP goals and exceeding many.
 - So much is being done by Ag already, but there is pressure for farmers to do more.
 - Edwin suggested a BMP multiplier for adjacent properties that are within the same watershed.

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff Updates:

Rachel Jones:

- To date, MDA has testified on 27 bills.
- Current Priority Bills
 - Departmental Fee Bill
 - Certified Local Farm and Fish Program
 - Budget Bill
 - DAF Utilization Permit Bill
- Session ends on 4/8
- Projected \$250 M shortfall in the budget.

Cassie Shirk:

- March is Maryland Wine Month.

- 3/20 there will be an event in downtown Annapolis highlighting this industry.
- The Farmers Market Conference was a huge success on 3/12.
- Governor declared the week of March 3rd, Weights & Measures week.
- Ag Literacy Week will be celebrated starting March 17th, MDA will be engaging with several schools to read books about agriculture to young students.

Hans Schmidt:

- Hughes Center and UMD are doing an assessment on climate change and its impact on agriculture.
 - This data will help shape new and existing programs within the department.
- Agricultural Re-Engagement Roundtable
 - As a watershed we are not going to reach our goals, and agriculture is going to be asked to do more.
 - As programs are being devised if they are not practical for farmers, they won't happen. Agriculture needs to be at the table to voice what is going to fit into their system.
- Cover Crop
 - Jason Kepler and his team are working on next year's cover crop program, engaging with farmers to get feedback on how to streamline that process.

Jessica Hackett:

- A new PIO has been hired.
- Chesapeake Bay Week is coming up and featured on MPT.

Martin Proulx:

- USDA RFSI Grants are due Friday, March 15th.
- MDA VAA presenting to Central Atlantic States Association of Public Health Officials
 - Continuing to educate and partner with the organizations that regulate and interact with the VAA sector.

Michael Calkins:

- Turf and Seed transitioning to OneStop.
- Spongy Moth suppression this year will cover approximately 30,000 acres.
- Spotted Lanternfly quarantine has been expanded to Charles and Garrett Counties

Guest Reports:

- Dean Kairo (UMES) – 4/25 PFAS Workshop, invitation will be sent to Commission members.

New Business:

- New Legislative Updates
- Maryland Ag Commission Strategic Plan
 - Draft strategic plan was proposed to the Commission for review, input and comments requested by the April meeting.
 - The following main priorities were collected from a survey sent to Commission members in February 2024:
 - Farm profitability
 - Awareness of anti-agricultural policy
 - Limiting regulatory restrictions
 - Promotion and support of value-added agriculture.
 - Limiting farmland lost to development, industry, and environment.
 - Improving public perception of agriculture
 - Improving bay health and the environment
 - In order to address these priorities, several committees were proposed for members to meet and propose recommendations to the Secretary and legislature, perform case-studies, and engage stakeholders;
 - Farm Profitability and Sustainability Committee
 - Agricultural Policy and Advocacy Committee
 - Regulatory Reform and Oversight Committee
 - Value Added Agriculture Committee
 - Committee on Watershed Strategies
 - Several modifications were proposed on the restructuring of the named seats on the Commission.
 - Further discussion will be held at the April meeting.

Old Business:

- Follow-up on Old Legislative Updates

Meeting Adjourned by Cliff Newsome, seconded by Frank Allnutt.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary