

State Soil Conservation Committee
Final Minutes
January 19, 2023

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Kevin Atticks, nominee for MDA Secretary, joined briefly to introduce himself and discuss the important work of the department.

The minutes of December 2022 were approved. (Guy/Posey)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:
Carroll SCD – Janet O’Meara (Hager/Jarboe)

Discussions

Alisha Mulkey, SSSCC, presented the draft 2023 work plan calendar based on the discussions at the December SSSCC meeting. During the subsequent Q&A, an attendee raised concerns to the SSSCC on review and approval of Ag Ponds and the latest MDE guidance on small pond reviews. The SSSCC members requested this topic be tentatively added to the work plan for March 2023.

Motion: The 2023 work plan calendar is approved with an additional topic for March 2023.
(Posey/Guy)

Next, Alisha Mulkey, SSSCC, on behalf of the Conservation Partnership, reviewed contents of a forthcoming memo from SSSCC on compliance with federal rules known as Farm Bill section 1619 provisions.

The passage of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (“2008 Farm Bill”) included provisions in Section 1619 which prohibits disclosure of certain information about producers by the USDA and its partners. Subsequently, NRCS issued guidance to cooperating Districts about their roles and responsibilities in protecting confidential producer information pursuant to Section 1619. The language has also been added to the recent Memorandum of Agreements between NRCS and each District. The federal provisions are in addition to Maryland state laws that also protect the producer identity contained in a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan (“Plan”).

SSCC is seeking to ensure clarity and continuity among the Districts through the guidance memo. The memo contains 5 questions and responses specifically related to the process and protections for a Plan. Alisha reviewed each question with the attendees and will distribute the memo following the meeting to District Managers and Board chairs.

Following the presentation, SSSCC members and attendees held a Q&A. Additional question raised, but not addressed by the memo, will be coordinated for a response.

Reports –

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported staff are working with Mr. Atticks and Governor Moore’s office to ensure a smooth, successful transition. We are pleased with the nomination of Kevin Atticks and the experience he will bring to MDA.

Concurrently, the 2023 legislative session has begun, and staff are monitoring bills that can impact the industry or department. The Governor’s budget will be released tomorrow. Large impacts to MDA are not expected.

Conservation Grants is working to update the flat rates according to the SSSCC discussion in December.

District Operations is onboarding another 20 new staff.
Nutrient Management has mailed the 2022 AIR, and the annual NM update will be held February 14.

Jim George, MDE reported the Department has issued the final renewal permit for the General Permit for Discharges from Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity (the 20-CP), effective April 1, 2023. Use this link to access the permit and associated documents.

https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/wwp/Pages/gp_construction.aspx.

The new permit does rely heavily on approved E&SC and SWPN plans, but also contains requirements for creation of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) to address practices and pollutants not included on the E&SC, includes specific monitoring and reporting requirements, includes turbidity benchmarks for dewatering. Refer to the permit to fully understand the requirements. Existing permittees (registered under the previous 14-GP permit) must submit a Notice of Intent no later than September 30, 2023, to prevent a lapse in coverage. To stay abreast of this and other General Permit updates or training opportunities, you can sign up for a newsletter at this link: Click [here](#) .

AFO operators who currently do not have coverage under an AFO Permit and are seeking coverage to legally operate under the AFO Permit may have existing resource concerns at their farm operation that need to be addressed. Operators in this situation may currently be seeking or have sought assistance at the county SCD offices for the design and installation of conservation practices that meet NRCS Practice Standards. A CNMP that identifies conservation practices on the facility implementation schedule provides assurance that an operator is responsible to complete the required conservation practices to meet the quality criteria for soil erosion, air and water quality. AFO Division is encouraging operators to initiate contact with their county SCD offices as an important step in the process to obtain AFO Permit coverage.

DNR, no report.

Brad Michael and Laura Eddy for NRCS reported the new MD State Conservationist will start February 12. Renovations at the state office remain underway.

Kendrick Flowers has been hired to fill Field Operations vacancy and will start February 13.

The Inflation Reduction Act will bring new funding and focus for NRCS programs on climate smart agriculture. More details on Maryland budgets are forthcoming.

Laura Pleasanton for FSA reported Dairy Margin Coverage deadline to enroll was extended to January 31, 2023. In the past, we have worked with MDA and the Governor's office to pay up to the highest level of coverage for Maryland producers under DMC, however we did not have funds to re-up that support for 2023. Despite not offering the buy up support, enrollment is still strong for 2023 DMC and most producers who participated before look to participate again.

A nationwide survey to gather feedback on programs and services offered from FSA, NRCS and RMA is now available from USDA. It is legitimate and we welcome the feedback, especially from any prospective customers that we have not worked with yet. Surveys are available online at farmers.gov/survey and 11,000 printed surveys have been mailed to stakeholders, so as leaders in the ag field, you may end up with one.

FSA is gearing up to roll out the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two as well as the new Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) which are both intended to offset crop and revenue losses for producers. A few staff are heading off to national training next week and then FSA will be holding state training in February to prepare our staff to implement the new program. ERP Phase Two is intended to support producers that suffered losses in 2020 and 2021 and weren't covered in phase 1 (i.e. they didn't have crop insurance or participate in NAP) PARP will assist eligible producers of agricultural commodities who experienced revenue decreases in calendar year 2020 compared to 2018 or 2019 due to the pandemic. PARP is intended to help address gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses. More information is forthcoming, and in the meantime, Maryland FSA's webpage has a news release with more information regarding which tax records can be gathered in preparation for this new program.

March 15th is the deadline to enroll in ARC PLC for the 2023 crop year. The next General CRP sign up should be announced soon with Grasslands CRP following that signup. Continuous CRP and CREP are business as usual right now.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported the 2023 Winter Meeting is set for February 9th and 10th at the Graduate Hotel in Annapolis. Online registration is available. Legislation for a Baltimore City SCD has been repropoed already. MASCD supports the establishment of an SCD but has concerns about the proposed Board structure contained in the bill.

Darren Jarboe, UME, reported A team from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources led by Dean Craig Beyroudy met with a Perdue Farms team led by CEO Randy Day to discuss the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Two new campus Extension specialists have joined the University of Maryland, Fabiana Cardoso, ruminant nutritionist, Animal and Avian Sciences Department and Niranjana Krishnan, pesticide toxicity and education, Entomology Department.

The Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) agent associate position in Howard County has been accepted with an expected start date in March. The precision agriculture state specialist position initial interviews will take place over the next two weeks.

The Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station Assistant Research Professor and Center Director for the Central Maryland, Lower Eastern Shore, and Western Maryland Research and Educations Centers position has been accepted with an anticipated start date in February.

The University of Maryland Extension is seeking undergraduate student applicants interested in careers in agriculture. Applications are open for the 2023 Creating Leadership and Professional Development Through Extension Internships Program. Students who are interested in a career in Extension or agricultural industries and want to learn more about Extension, applied research, and community outreach, while gaining professional development, leadership skills, and job experience are encouraged to apply. This internship is a great experiential learning opportunity for students seeking a degree or professional certification in agriculture, natural sciences, biological sciences, environmental education, and related programs. Students enrolled in a two-year program and sophomores and juniors enrolled in a four-year degree program receive higher priority for this paid internship. For more information, including the application, visit <https://go.umd.edu/extensioninternships>. The program contacts are Shannon Dill, AgFS Extension Educator (410-822-1244, sdill@umd.edu) and Andrea Franchini, AgFS program assistant (410-856-1850 x126,| andrea1@umd.edu).

Dr. Jurgen Schwarz retired from UMES on December 31, 2022. He has served on the Agriculture Law Education Initiative Leadership Committee since the program's inception about a decade ago. Dr. Nelson Escobar has taken over this role.

The AgFS Program winter agronomy, forage, fruit and vegetable, and livestock and poultry meetings continue for the remainder of winter. Meetings are posted on the Extension calendar at <https://extension.umd.edu/news-events/events/>.

John Murphy, Ag Commission had limited updates but will bring a full report in February.

Amy Posey, Southern MD

Anne Arundel:

- We have completed the first phase of the beaver analog project. In late winter or early spring, we will finish phase two with the planting of 2,000 whips and 1,000 trees.
- We are working with the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation who is sponsoring an Ag Connect event on February 23rd. This event is to help new farmers connect with service providers such as the Soil Conservation District, NRCS, the Cooperative Extension, etc. It is an informal evening event that will also put new farmers in touch with experienced farmers so they can ask questions about farming practices.

Calvert: No report

Charles:

- Charles SCD is waiting for MDA to advertise the vacant planner and technician positions.
- Charles SCD is hosting Tractor College January 23rd

Prince George's:

- As a result of the NRCS bulletin where NRCS will no longer be reviewing SWM ponds, MDE has since lumped in ag ponds with the same requirements as SWM pond reviews, construction & as-built requirements in their newest policy. See Maryland Dam Safety Small Pond Office Hours - December 20, 2022 - YouTube

St. Mary's:

- St. Mary's SCD Cooperators dinner meeting will be held on Friday, February 17, 2023 at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department. The caterer will be Thompson's Seafood Catering and the menu will include oyster and shrimp. Formal invitations will be sent out soon via email and direct mailings.
- St. Mary's SCD has just completed a comprehensive evaluation of our erosion and sediment control user fees. A revised fee structure has been submitted to St. Mary's County Commissioners for approval as part of the county budget cycle. New fees will go into effect on July 1, 2023 unless the county decides to offset the fee increase. Our current Erosion and Sediment control specialist will be retiring in May and the District will be advertising later this spring for a new employee.
- We still have two MDA vacancies within our office that were not filled in the last hiring process. I have been assured that these positions will be advertised again very soon, but the concern is that as we get closer to the WIP deadline, these critical positions were factored into our WIP numbers as filled positions. Recent numbers show that new plans are not keeping up with the number of expiring plans that were completed ten years ago when we were fully staffed.

Bobby Guy, Lower Shore reported the recent passing of Richard "Dick" Wright, a longtime member of the Wicomico SCD Board and former SSCC Chair.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD reported that Washington County SCD had received approval from MDE for the proposed engineer that will review small pond approvals.

Tony Riggi for Upper Shore reported that the Area flat rates had been drafted and the workgroup would be meeting next week with Conservation Grants.

Van Funk, Central MD report forthcoming

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: January 19, 2023

Members:

Van Funk, SSCC
Amy Posey, SSCC
Ed Wurmb, SSCC
Steve Freeman, SSCC
Hans Schmidt, MDA
John Murphy, Ag Commission
James "Smokey" Stanton, SSCC
Dr. Darren Jarboe, UME
Jim George, MDE
Phil Hager, DNR
Robert Guy, SSCC

Absent:

John Sullivan, FSA
Eric McTaggart, NRCS
Bruce Yerkes, MASCD

Others:

Adam Heavner, Allegany SCD
John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD
Dee Dee Saunders, Charles SCD
Heather Hutchinson, Frederick
and Catoctin SCD
Diane Flickinger, Frederick SCD
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD
David Plummer, Howard SCD
Gail Myers, PGSCD
John Tarr, PGSCD
Harrison Palmer, PGSCD
Anthony Riggi, QASCD
Bruce Young, St. Marys SCD
Haley Carter, St. Marys SCD
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD
Jason Keppler, MDA
Byron Petrauskas, MDA
Tom Filbert, OAG
Steve Strano, NRCS
Alisha Mulkey, MDA
Jen Nelson, MASCD
Mark Carey, Somerset SCD
Jason Watt, Frederick SCD
David Mister, MDA
John Tarr, PGSCD

Rick Glasgow, Wicomico SCD
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD
Matt McMahon, Carroll SCD
Brad Michael, NRCS
Laura Eddy, NRCS
Laura Pleasanton, FSA
Steve Connelly, MDA
Kevin Atticks, MDA