

State Soil Conservation Committee
Final Minutes
February 16, 2023

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

The minutes of January 2022 with one correction were approved. (Posey/Schmidt)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:
Baltimore County SCD – Mark Duvall (Wurmb/Guy)

Discussions

Stefania Shamet and Jeff Lapp, EPA Region 3, presented on the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule. The rule's final language was released December 30, 2022 and will become effective in March 20, 2023.

The definition of WOTUS is a critical term in the Clean Water Act, but is not defined in legislation. Rather, the regulatory agencies – EPA and Army Corps of Engineers – have defined the term since the 1970s. This has created changes in the definition over time and allowed the rule to be subject to litigation. With the new ruling, the agencies are returning the definition to the familiar, narrower pre-2015 regulations with some amendments. The goal is to provide clarity to users and incorporate best available science.

Since its release in December, EPA has released several memos and public communication tools to summarize the rule including a memo for the agricultural community. These materials are available at <https://www.epa.gov/wotus/revising-definition-waters-united-states>

The rule is organized into three parts: jurisdictional waters, exclusions, and definitions. For today's discussion Ms. Shamet and Mr. Lapp focused on the components most relevant to agriculture. The rule does not change the existing exemptions for agricultural activities on prior converted cropland if a change in use does not occur.

Following EPA, Colby Ferguson, Maryland Farm Bureau, reminded attendees the Clean Water Act and WOTUS are broader in focus than just agriculture, but Farm Bureau has concerns about local determinations for "significant nexus" and encouraged EPA to provide clarity and certainty to producers. Colby shared that Maryland's higher regulatory requirements for wetlands will also result in lesser impact than in surrounding states when the rule is implemented. Farm Bureau expects the rule to be litigated.

Following the speakers, SSCC and attendees had Q&A on the subject.

NOTE: EPA is seeking permission to share the slides from February 16. When (if) available, they will be distributed.

Next, Suzy Daubert, NRCS introduced herself as the new Maryland State Conservationist. She brings over 20 years' experience with NRCS to the new role. She briefly reported on the 19 projects in Maryland (and other states) that have recently been awarded USDA Climate Smart Commodity funds. These projects are in the early contract phases with USDA, but Maryland NRCS is working to define its administrative roles and responsibilities for each project. More details will be shared as information becomes available.

Reports –

Phil Hager, DNR reported the agency is working to address vacancies across several programs. In the interim staff remain very busy with the legislative session.

Marian Honecny has been hired as the new Associate Director within Maryland Forest Service. In her new role she will coordinate legislative activity, lead interagency collaboration, and be the primary coordinator for the 5M Tree Initiative.

Jim George, MDE reported the agency is also working to fill several vacant positions.

The agency is meeting with CBF to discuss House Bill 602 and opportunities to expand living shoreline projects as opposed to hard scape stabilizations.

Darren Jarboe, UME reported The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has lost seven nutrient management advisors in the past few months. The process to hire new advisors is ongoing, but taking significant time. The Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Extension Program is working with ANMP and the Maryland Department of Agriculture to address this shortfall of nutrient management advisors. A plan has been developed and execution is underway.

Nathan Glenn has been hired as the new AgFS Extension agent associate in Howard County. He served five years as agriculture educator/agribusiness development agent for Hope in the Harvest/Liberia International Christian College in Liberia, West Africa. As an independent consultant, Nathan developed AgriCorps training program curricula and train-the-trainer workshops for 4-H Liberia Field Agents. He was an AgriCorps Fellow/Booker Washington Institute agriculture teacher in Margibi County, Liberia. Nathan held agriculture teacher positions at Harford and Washington County Public Schools. He was an undergraduate teaching assistant at University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). Nathan had a variety of agriculture-related internships, and college and community leadership roles. He received B.S. degrees in animal science and education from UMD and a MBA from Anderson University. Nathan grew up on the Glenn Family Farm in Highland, Maryland.

Two finalists have been selected for the precision agriculture state specialist position. Second interviews will take place on February 28 at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center.

Dr. Alan Leslie has been hired as assistant research professor and center director for the Central Maryland, Lower Eastern Shore, and Western Maryland Research and Education Centers of the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES). He is currently the AgFS educator in Charles County. Alan will start with MAES on March 27.

The University of Maryland Extension 2023 Creating Leadership and Professional Development Through Extension Internships Program is accepting student applications through March 17. For more information, including the application, visit <https://go.umd.edu/extensioninternships>. Contact Shannon Dill, AgFS Extension Educator (410-822-1244, sdill@umd.edu) and Andrea Franchini, AgFS program assistant (410-856-1850 x126, andrea1@umd.edu) for additional information.

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

Suzy Daubert, NRCS expressed appreciation for the warm welcome to Maryland. She is excited about her new role. There are other new staff members at the state office, including Kendrick Flowers for Field Operations. Suzy and Kendrick are working to attend several meetings, including District Board meetings, to meet the partners.

John Sullivan, FSA reported 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. There is an upcoming joint agency CREP Teams training for anyone that works closely with the program. If you are interested and didn't receive an invite, feel free to contact Laura Pleasanton. FSA, NRCS and DNR are also hosting two smaller in-person workshops to cover material pertaining to riparian buffers.

As for reenrollments, there are about 4,200 acres expiring this year in Maryland. This is down from last year's number of 4,700 acres. Queen Anne's, Dorchester, and Kent have the most acres expiring this year. Frederick, Talbot, Carroll, Cecil, and Somerset and Caroline also have sizeable workloads this year for reenrollments. It seems like we're in good shape with these reenrollments.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported the 2023 Winter Meeting survey is available for feedback. She is returning from the NACD annual meeting in New Orleans where a new group has been established for the State Directors.

Amy Posey, Southern MD

Anne Arundel:

- MDA has filled the MDA planner position in our office which will be very helpful.
- Hopefully the MDA technician position will be filled soon.

Calvert:

- 75th Annual Cooperators Dinner will be held at the Calvert County Fairgrounds March 16, 2023. Tickets are \$40.00, Thompsons will be serving!

Charles:

- SCD hosted Tractor College January 23rd, it was well attended and much information disseminated to local farmers
- MDA has informed SCD that the vacant MDA Technician position will be advertised.
- Practice Keeper Ag planning software continues to be a great tool for Charles SCD Ag Planners.
- Staff are receiving many inquiries related to small, urban ag operations
- County Envirothon is scheduled for April 19.
- SCD's Annual Dinner Meeting is scheduled for May 24th.

Prince George's:

- Cooperator of the Year dinner is scheduled for April 19.

St. Mary's:

- SCD Cooperators dinner meeting will be held on Friday, February 17, 2023 at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department. Tickets are \$40 per person, and a few space are still available. Call the district if interested to attend.
- One MDA Conservation Planner, one MDA Technician, and one NRCS Soil Con will be hired. In the future, the SCD will hire a full-time E&S Control Specialist.

Area-wide, Ares 2 workgroup finalized its regional MACS flat rates and submitted to the MACS office on February 10.

Bobby Guy, Lower Shore no report.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD no report.

Steve Freeman, Upper Shore no report.

Van Funk, Central MD

Baltimore County SCD:

- Worked with the Central Area Districts to update the MACS Flat Rates.
- Met with the Baltimore County Executive, along with the DC, Extension, and MDA reps to see how Urban Agriculture can be better supported.
- Attended the annual Noxious Weed Board meeting.
- Supported Extension's annual Vegetable Growers Day.

Cecil SCD:

- Held the 75th annual cooperator banquet in January – the first one since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Three new MDA employees joined the District in December and January.

Harford SCD:

- The Harford SCD teamed up with the Farm and Community Partnership of Harford County to prepare for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harford County. One objective is to recognize legacy farms that have been family owned for 100 years and older. A planned celebration is scheduled for June 9-10.
- Planners have been working with MDA to verify undocumented resource improvements and/or BMPs with expired maintenance periods. Verified practices which are functioning and meet criteria have been inputted into Conservation Tracker. The most recent verification report was submitted to MDA in January.
- Technicians have been working with the Central Area Districts to finalize the new MACS Flat Rate schedule for the Central Region.
- Several high school Envirothon teams will be delivering their fifth topic (Adapting to a Changing Climate) presentations at the Harford Glen Environmental Education Center on Saturday, February 25, 2023. Harford SCD is coordinating this event.

Howard SCD

- Howard SCD will be hosting a Mid-Winter Ag meeting for local farmers in March to provide information on soil health, urban ag grants, mental health, soil lime requirements, and a nutrient management update which will satisfy NM training requirements for farmers.
- Howard SCD Supervisors have been asked to serve on a task force committee to evaluate proposed changes to the current payout structure for the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program.
- Two Howard SCD Supervisors made their way down to New Orleans for the NACD meeting
- Howard SCD is scheduled to meet with County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball next week to finalize details for the FY'24 District Budget.

Montgomery SCD: No report

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: February 16, 2023

Members:

Van Funk, SSCC
Amy Posey, SSCC
Ed Wurmb, SSCC
Hans Schmidt, MDA
Jim George, MDE
Phil Hager, DNR
Robert Guy, SSCC
Bruce Yerkes, MASCD
John Sullivan, FSA
Suzy Daubert, NRCS

Absent:

Dr. Darren Jarboe, UME
John Murphy, Ag Commission
James "Smokey" Stanton, SSCC
Steve Freeman, SSCC

Others:

David Plummer, Howard SCD
John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD
Heather Hutchinson, Frederick
and Catoctin SCD
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD
Diane Flickinger, Frederick SCD
Andrew League, Harford SCD
Steve Darcey, PGSCD
Anthony Riggi, QASCD
Jerry Spence, Charles SCD
Dan Polite, Cecil SCD
Gail Myers, PGSCD
Mark Carey, Somerset SCD
Dee Price, Washington County SCD
Rick Glasgow, Wicomico SCD
David Mister, MDA
Adam Lyon, MDA
Tom Filbert, OAG
Steve Strano, NRCS
John Tarr, PGSCD
Bill Brennan
Jessica Linn
Bruce Young, St. Marys SCD
Jen Nelson, MASCD
Mark Kendle, Washington County SCD
Keith Potter, MDA
Alisha Mulkey, MDA
Stefania Shamet, EPA
Jeff Lapp, EPA
Kelly Shenk, EPA
Colby Ferguson, MD Farm Bureau