

State Soil Conservation Committee
Final Minutes
March 16, 2023

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

The minutes of February 2023 with one correction were approved. (Guy/Wurmb)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:
Garrett SCD – Richard William Helbig (Guy/Freeman)

Discussions

Hans Schmidt, MDA, presented an update from the Conservation Grants program on the roll out of the new flat rate schedule. Following the motions of SSCC from the December 2022, meeting, MACS staff proceeded to reconvene the regional workgroups. Meetings and materials were shared in January, with a submission request from the workgroups in February. Documents and flat rates have been finalized and will be ready for implementation on April 1 (motion #1). These flat rates will supersede the 30% COVID adjustment that has been in place. SCD trainings have been scheduled in March to cover MACS eligibility and processes (motion #3).

The Western Maryland region will pilot the component-based flat rate schedule and bring information and lessons learned to MACS and SSCC for future discussion.

In addition, MACS staff will work with the new administration following the legislative session to potentially change the MDA regulations regarding the farm cap limits for MACS projects (motion #2).

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

Next J'que Jones, NRCS and John Roche, MDE provided an update on small pond reviews for agricultural ponds. Following the updated policies from MDE in late 2022 for small pond approvals, it was unclear if agricultural ponds were subject to the new MDE policy or prior NRCS procedures. Speakers were invited to SSCC to address outstanding questions.

J'que reminded attendees that small ponds are included under the 378 NRCS standard and subject to regular updates per national NRCS policy. However, unique to Maryland, is that state regulation for MDE incorporates 378 by reference. Thus efforts by NRCS to update the standard need additional comment and consultation with MDE, which has been ongoing since October 2022. J'que reviewed the key updates to the standard, including closer alignment to MDE policy. John confirmed that MDE regulations still reference a dated version of standard 378 (2000), but the NRCS updates will not contradict the regulations. MDE does anticipate updating the regulations as part of a more comprehensive regulatory review process. In the interim, **MDE reminds all interested parties that state regulations refer to MDE policy and supplemental criteria finalized in December for all small pond reviews.** MDE remains available for questions and consultations on the subject and has developed an FAQ document that will be posted to the website. John reviewed questions from the FAQ.

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

Reports –

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported the Cover Crop TAC meeting would occur April 6. MDA is working with UM Extension to address staff shortages and NM plan needs. MACS has announced a new incentive for tree plantings to further support the state's 5M tree planting goal. The new incentive will be a bonus payment of \$2 per tree in addition to the available cost-share. The incentive will apply to tree plantings that are non-CREP and non-Conservation Buffer Initiative.

District Operations currently has 17 vacancies and 2 anticipated. Paperwork has been sent to HR to fill 14 of the positions. District Ops is also working with the SCDs on Trust Fund agreements for the year.

Jim George, MDE reported the agency is working to issue guidance on the newly required EJ review and screening for several MDE-issued permits, including AFOs.

Under review - AFO operations within the 100 and 500-year floodplain may be subject to new regulations to mitigate climate change.

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.

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.

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 and second interviews took place February 28 and March 7 at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center. Lynn Rubin Traversa began as the new area extension director for the Central Cluster (Frederick, Howard, and Montgomery Counties) on February 27. She began her UME career in January 2009 as a faculty extension assistant in Montgomery County and most recently worked as a Senior Faculty Specialist in the SNAP-Ed state office.

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 meetings wrapped up and most had strong attendance.

Suzy Daubert, NRCS reported funding from the Inflation Reduction Act is being allocated to states and programs for each coming fiscal year. The signup deadline for EQIP is March 24.

NRCS is working with MASCD to outline a new agreement for technical assistance delivery through the SCDs.

Hiring for 6 vacant Soil Con positions is in progress.

John Sullivan, FSA reported 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 are underway.

General CRP offers are being accepted through April 7.

CREP trainings for staff, both general and forestry-specific, have been completed. Trainings were well attended.

USDA Sec. Vilsack visited a Maryland dairy farm, Lippy Brothers, on February 24 to see climate smart conservation.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported she is soliciting input from the SCDs about a restructured agreement with NRCS.

The next Board of Directors meeting will occur March 28, hybrid format.

March 22 is the NACD fly-in to Washington DC. She encourages more Board Supervisors to consider attending.

Jen is adding an Outreach and Education Planner to her staff at Resource Smart, LLC.

John Murphy, Ag Commission no report.

Amy Posey, Southern MD

Anne Arundel:

- The Anne Arundel District participated in an event called Ag Connection. It was sponsored by Anne Arundel Economic Development on February 23rd. The District and NRCS shared a table at the event. It is an event to introduce new farmers to all the available resources such as the Soil Conservation District, NRCS the UM Extension, MDA, etc. They had a panel of farmers that described their operation and answered questions.

Calvert:

- Envirothon training for the next State Champions is upcoming.
- The County noxious weed committee met and discussed Palmer Amaranth and Johnson grass. The committee consists of elements of SHA, MDA, FSA, the Farm Bureau, Kirby Ag., U of M Extension, Calvert DPW, and the Calvert SCD.

Charles:

- Assisted with opening session for UME's Beginning Farmers Program
- Participated in Charles County Board of Ed HITS Expo (HITS = History, Information Technology & Science). Promoted the Envirothon, coloring contest, poster contests, education opportunities with districts and overall agriculture outreach.
- Charles SCD Envirothon Training on March 29th
- Charles SCD Envirothon on April 19th
- Charles SCD Annual Dinner Meeting on May 24th

Prince George's:

- Cooperator of the Year Dinner scheduled for April 19th.

St. Mary's:

- Hosting the Southern Maryland Dinner meeting October 19, 2023.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD:

Catoctin and Frederick:

- The Districts published the inaugural issue of "District Digest", a quarterly newsletter designed to provide timely information to the agricultural community.
- Gearing up for Envirothon with the training day scheduled for March 25 and the competition will be held on April 25.
- The Frederick SCD is offering the George Nicholson Memorial Scholarship of up to \$1,000 for students in Frederick County who are interested in pursuing a career related to renewable natural resources, land use or conservation. The deadline to apply is April 15. Applications are available on the website or by contacting the district office.

Washington County:

- Preparing to sign and move forward with two stream restoration grants; one via MDE's 319 Grant Program for \$450,000 within Hamilton Run's Watershed (in the City of Hagerstown) and; one via DNR's Grant Program for \$503,122 within Little Antietam South's Watershed, in the Town of Boonsboro.

- Closing today (March 16, 2023) on a permanent easement, \$68,804 for 27.96 acres of existing forest on Independence Road, Clear Spring, MD, bordering the Conococheague Creek via our Forest Conservation Program using Payment in Lieu of funds.
- An additional \$266,000+ in process for protecting 99+ acres of forest in the immediate Potomac River Watershed using Payment in Lieu of funds via our Forest Conservation Program.
- For the District's Urban Program – Beginning the switch to an Electronic Plan Review system via Washington County Government.

Bobby Guy, Lower Shore reported field work is underway for spring planting.

The Wicomico SCD office will be moving soon.

Bill Giese, long-time SCD Supervisor in Dorchester SCD recently passed away.

Steve Freeman, Upper Shore no report.

Van Funk, Central MD

Baltimore County SCD:

- The District met with the Baltimore County Dept. of Environmental Protection and Sustainability to review/discuss next generation watershed plans.
- BCSCD participated in the District Managers roundtable.
- The District met with the Baltimore County Executive, along with the DC, Extension, and MDA reps to discuss how to better support urban agriculture.
- District staff attended the annual Noxious Weed Board meeting.
- District staff supported the Extension's Annual Vegetable Growers Day.

Cecil SCD:

- In February several staff attended the NACD annual meeting in New Orleans. Staff heard from several nationally accredited speakers and had a chance to participate in breakout sessions.
- The district participated in Cecil County's Ag Symposium: Rooted in Our Community Positioning for the Future held on March 4. Staff coordinated speakers from MDA and the Nature Conservancy to speak about soil health. Other topics include a panel discussion from students attending the Cecil School of Technologies Ag Science Program, a presentation and discussion hosted by UMD Ag Law and Education Initiative regarding Right to Farm Laws, and a "lightning round" where farmers new to the business discuss their operations and how they have diversified over the past several years.
- In early March the district coordinated with NRCS to provide "in-field" soils training to staff from the Cecil County Department of Land Use and Development Services as well as the Cecil County Department of Public Works -Stormwater Management Division.
- The District plans to hold a nutrient management meeting for local farmers on March 17 at the Calvert Grange where nutrient management credits will be provided.

Harford SCD

- The Harford SCD will have a display booth at the "Harford 250 – First Look Event" at the APG Federal Credit Union Arena on March 31. This is a ticketed event with speakers, music, and an art show. This the first of many planned yearlong activities to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harford County.
- Harford SCD staff have been in the process of creating a forest harvest application checklist and updating the "Standard Plan" notations to conform to the 2015 MDE/DNR/SSCC forest harvest manual.
- On March 8, Harford SCD Board of Supervisors accepted and signed the "Award Agreement between the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Harford Soil Conservation District". This agreement will provide essential funding to complete the design and obtain the permits for a new stream restoration project.

- On February 25, eight Harford County high school Envirothon teams competed in this year's fifth topic (Adapting to a Changing Climate). The winning school won by 8 points. The "Spring Workshop" for Harford County Envirothon teams is scheduled for March 24 at the Harford Glen.

Howard SCD: No Report

Montgomery SCD:

- The District is hopeful that the engineer position will be filled by the end of March or beginning of April. The County's Office of Human Resources has extended an offer to an applicant. The engineers position will complete both small pond reviews and ag bmp design/review.
- MSCD will be assisting the U of MD Extension with Nutrient Plan Updates. The District is coordinating the process with MDA in an effort to assist cooperators in achieving nutrient management compliance.
- On March 31, the District will be conducting an Envirothon training day in preparation for the April 27 local competition.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: March 16, 2023

Members:

Bob Guy
Van Funk
Amy Posey
Ed Wurmb
Bruce Yerkes
Darren Jarboe
Steve Freeman
Hans W. Schmidt
John Murphy
Suzy Daubert
James Stanton
John Sullivan
Jim George

Absent:

N/A

Others:

Byron Petrauskas, MDA
David Mister, MDA
Dee Price, Washington Co. SCD
John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD
John Shepard, Caroline SCD
Matt D. McMahon, Carroll SCD
Heather Hutchinson, Catoclin and Frederick SCD
Jason Watt, Frederick SCD
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD
Dan Polite, Cecil SCD
Tim Wells, Charles SCD
DeeDee Saunders, Charles SCD
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD
Scott Hipkins, Frederick SCD
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD
Andrew P. League, Harford SCD
Jen Nelson, MASCD
Keith Potter, MDA
Eileen Beard, PGSCD
Paul D. Meyer, Montgomery SCD
Genevieve Lister, NRCS

Leon Tillman, NRCS
John Zawitoski, Montgomery SCD
David Plummer, Howard SCD
Gail Myers, PGSCD
Steve Darcey, PGSCD
Heather M. Zdobysz, PGSCD
Diana Lagunes, PGSCD
Anthony Riggi, QASCD
Bruce Young, St. Mary's SCD
Haley Carter, St. Mary's SCD
Mark W. Carey, Somerset SCD
Shawn Smith, Talbot SCD
Richard Glasgow, Wicomico SCD
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD
Rob Schnabel, CBF
Clarence Cullum
Tom Filbert, OAG
John Roche, MDE
J'que Jones, NRCS
Thomas Bagamsah, MDA
Jason Keppler, MDA
Alisha Mulkey, MDA