

State Soil Conservation Committee
Final Minutes
April 20, 2023

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

The minutes of March 2023 were approved. (Guy/Posey)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:
None

Discussions

Alisha Mulkey, MDA, presented the 2022 annual progress toward the state's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Individual conservation practices and progress for the 2025 goal were reviewed, with implementation highlights for the year in:

- Stream access fencing
- Conservation tillage
- Cover crops
- Conversion to pasture and open space
- Prescribed grazing
- Ag Stormwater Management

Other practices – Ag Drainage Management, Dairy Precision Feeding, and Alternative Crops are making progress with innovative tools to better capture the data.

In addition to new implementation, the Field Verification Team has re-verified over 24,000 practices as of January 2023 which allows the BMPs to continue being credited towards the WIP and document retained water quality benefits. Meanwhile, MDA continues to evaluate existing initiatives and align new initiatives to maximize co-benefits of practices and encourage additional adoption of conservation.

Following today's presentation, the slides will be distributed to the SSCC members and SCDs. Elizabeth Hoffman will be in touch to begin scheduling one-on-one meetings with each SCD to review their progress and address questions.

Next, progress toward the Conowingo WIP (CWIP) was presented by several members of the Conowingo WIP Steering Committee – Matt Rowe, MDE; Jill Whitcomb, PADEP; and Amanda Pollack, Center for Watershed Protection.

Speakers presented on the 4 questions below, with responses summarized:

1. What is the current status/progress in achieving the CWIP? To-date, no conservation practices have been implemented toward the CWIP but a planning document and targeting concept for practices and locations has been developed.
2. For the funding mechanism and pay-for-performance model, are soil conservation districts (SCDs) eligible to apply? Conservation funding for the CWIP, will be primarily overseen by the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) as a pay-for-performance concept. Both Maryland and Pennsylvania are providing funding to SRBC via an MOU, and then SRBC will oversee funding requests for proposals, agreements, and payments. The details of the MOU and funding requests are still in progress, but eligible entities could include the SCDs.
3. Who and how will certify projects on aglands? Details of project verification are still being defined, but the applying entity for the funds will have to include information on how the

practice will be verified and monitored in order to demonstrate the estimated outcomes. Understanding of NRCS practice codes and standards will not be required, but additional conversation could occur between the Steering Committee and states to establish more guidelines.

4. How is MDE instructing SRBC to report practice implementation on aglands so that SCDs and MDA have knowledge of implementation and avoid any double counting? The tracking and reporting of BMPs funded through the SRBC will count toward the CWIP regardless of location. Data reporting tools and protocols are still being developed, so it is unclear at this time how cross collaboration will occur.

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

Reports –

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported the 2023 legislative session is complete. We are awaiting the Governor's signature on passed bills, including new urban ag initiatives.

Governor Moore will be visiting MDA on April 18 to announce another new initiative for farmers supporting food banks.

Districts helping to provide nutrient management plans will close out all requests this fiscal year. Next steps with MDA and UM Extension are still being discussed.

Secretary Atticks will be hosting a Deer Summit on May 11 to discuss crop damage, health concerns, and other related issues with the deer population. In the fall, he also plans to host a Solar Summit.

Jim George, MDE no report.

Darren Jarboe, UME reported a coalition of agricultural educators and professionals joined together to host the sixth annual "Agriculture Awareness Day" on April 12 and 13 in Centreville, Maryland. The program utilized the Next Generation Science Standards and Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards to educate seventh grade students at Queen Anne's County Public Schools about agriculture. With the use of educational stations throughout the day, students were fully involved in activities covering a variety of industries within agriculture and introduced to career opportunities. Thirty-nine sponsors and volunteers conducted the event. On April 5, University of Maryland Extension hosted an Ohio State University (OSU) Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Study Tour on the Eastern Shore. Fifteen OSU Extension educators participated in the tour that highlighted Maryland agriculture.

The University of Maryland Extension Creating Leadership and Professional Development Through Extension Internships Program has accepted nine students for the 2023 summer internship program. The students are attending Anne Arundel Community College; Community College of Baltimore County; Hagerstown Community College; Southern University and A&M College in Louisiana; University of Maryland, College Park; and University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

LEAD Maryland Class XII Fellows presented their projects to members of the Board of Trustees at the Maryland Farm Bureau in Davidsonville on April 7. A finalist has been selected and offered the precision agriculture state specialist position. Recruitment for an Agriculture and Food Systems Extension (AgFS) educator in Charles County has been initiated.

Two finalists for the assistant professor of agriculture and Extension education were brought to the UMD campus for interviews and meetings, and to present their vision for the program. The Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture is evaluating the candidates.

Genevieve Lister for NRCS reported Maryland NRCS is learning more about the Climate Smart Commodity projects that will include Maryland producers. No details to share at this time, but will keep the partnership updated.

IRA funding amounts have been determined for the state for FY2023-2026. Staff are meeting with MDA and MASCD on plans to best obligate the funds and ensure staff capacity.

Laura Pleasanton for FSA reported several program deadlines have just passed, including General CRP offers. Grassland CRP is now open.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported

NACD Fly-In: Steve Darcey, David Plummer and Suzy Daubert joined Jen Nelson to participate in the DC event on March 21. The group met with staffers from the offices of Representative Glenn Ivey, Senator Ben Cardin, Senator Van Hollen, and Representative Jamie Raskin. Jen had also hosted a call with Representative Kweisi Mfume's office the day prior. The group spoke with staffers about the upcoming Farm Bill and NACD's Appropriations requests to support technical assistance and answered lots of questions about the needs and resources available for urban ag producers. In a follow up, Jen was asked to review and comment on legislation to increase the number of independent Technical Service Providers, where she expressed support for a smoother process for TSP certification, along with concern for any aspect of the process that might undermine the locally-led conservation partnerships across the country.

Baltimore City Urban Ag Stakeholders Meeting: With legislation working through session for a second year to establish a conservation district in Baltimore City, MASCD has been working to advocate for a new district that follows a similar structure to other districts in the state. At the same time, we're bringing urban agricultural stakeholders together to talk about the challenges of urban farmers, the available resources and where remaining gaps exist to assist producers there. MASCD hosted a first meeting on March 27 to start discussion on the best path forward to address resource needs for urban farmers in the city, and will continue those discussions through the summer to identify next steps ahead of next year's legislative session.

FSCAP 2.0: MASCD is kicking off an effort to reboot the Farm Stewardship Program. We will be working with KR Creative Strategies over the next few months to refresh the branding and develop new outreach materials for the program. We'll also be working with partners to review program guidelines and identify incentives for farmers to participate. Finally, MASCD submitted a grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation earlier this week to fund a program leader and field assessors to help support the program. These efforts will continue into the fall, with plans to promote the new program through the 2023-2024 winter meeting season.

MASCD's Nominating Committee met on April 18 and nominated John Swaine for MASCD President, Van Funk for Vice President and Mike McGinnis for Treasurer. Nominations will remain open until the officers' election at the MASCD Annual Meeting in August.

MASCD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee met on April 11. The group discussed goals for the organization and a plan to implement the DEI policy passed in 2022. The group will develop a draft plan of work to present to the MASCD Board at the 2023 Annual Meeting to identify educational opportunities and recommendations to engage new groups within the SCDs. MASCD added Google Translate function to the website to translate our web content into multiple languages.

MASCD Board Meeting: March 28 at MDA in Annapolis. The Board met to review a proposal from KR Creative Strategies to rebrand FSCAP, proposed changes to Operating Rules and a Bylaw change to vote on at the Annual Meeting, and hear updates from partners.

MASCD 2023 Annual Meeting Update - Online registration for the meeting is scheduled to open on May 1. MASCD is currently reaching out to sponsors for the meeting, and is thankful to have received commitments for several sponsorships so far, including Farm Credit, NRCS, Prince George's SCD, Washington County SCD and Worcester County SCD. Thank you!

NRCS Agreement- MASCD and NRCS are working together with MDA to develop the next Cooperative Agreement between the organizations. This agreement has been used in the past for the SCDs to provide program support for EQIP and develop CRP/CREP plans. The new agreement will expand the list of deliverables that the districts can receive reimbursement for, and open up new opportunities for all of the conservation districts to participate. With a deadline to submit to NRCS Grants and Agreements Division by June 15, the new agreement needs to come together quickly. NRCS and MASCD are working on a "menu" of deliverables and payment rates that the districts can work with to develop a draft work plan over the next several weeks.

John Murphy, Ag Commission reported the legislative session included a native plants bill and will include cultivars in the definition.

The next Ag Commission tour is scheduled for May 10 in Dorchester and Wicomico counties.

Amy Posey, Southern MD

Anne Arundel: No report

Calvert:

- Holding our County Envirothon tomorrow April 20, in which we will determine the next State champions.

Charles:

- Charles SCD celebrated and held its 30th Charles County Envirothon Competition on April 19, 2023.
- Charles SCD will be holding the Annual Cooperator Dinner on May 24, 2023.
- Since October of last year, Charles SCD has had a significant increase in Urban/Ag requests. Most of these requests involve small properties, beginning farmers and possible land clearing. Significant staff time is often needed to educate and provide assistance. Charles SCD staff is working on an efficient way to provide the needed planning guidance without compromising the planning staff's workload assignments.

Prince George's:

- Cooperator of the Year Dinner yesterday, recognizing the 804 Cattle Company
- Envirothon competition next Wednesday. There are 17 teams from 10 high schools in the county.

St. Mary's:

- St. Mary's County Envirothon Competition will be held on Thursday, April 27, 2023 at Hunters Hill Farm in Leonardtown. 10 teams from 4 high schools will participate.
- A public hearing has been scheduled for the SCD's revised fee schedule for erosion and sediment control review fees. Public Hearing is at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at Chopticon High School. The new fee schedule was submitted as part of the SCD's budget submission to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County in January.
- St. Mary's SCD Annual report is completed and will be distributed this month. Notification with a link to the district website will be emailed to cooperators, districts and agencies. From the website, a copy can be printed if desired.
- Completing the MASCD awards and MAFC District of the Year award for submission to MASCD on May 5, 2023.

Dee Price for Washington County:

- The county Envirothon will be April 26 with 5 teams.
- The SCD is receiving calls for early termination of cover crops because of the dry weather.

Bobby Guy, Lower Shore thanked everyone for the support as the Wicomico SCD office completes its move.

Calls about termination for cover crops are also happening in this Area.

Van Funk, Central MD

Baltimore County SCD:

- District staff attended two MACS trainings.
- The District began to coordinate with a new Baltimore County position which is intended to support agriculture in the county.
- District staff attended a listening session with the Baltimore County Executive on agriculture.
- The District developed a small cost-share program to assist producers with nutrient management plans written by private NM consultants.
- Extension hired a new NM consultant in Baltimore County.
- District staff supported extension on a pasture walk at the Baltimore County Ag Center.

Harford SCD

- The Harford SCD is working with DNR to finalize a Chesapeake & Atlantic Coastal Bay Trust Fund grant agreement and scope of work for a stream restoration project along an unnamed tributary to Deer Creek. The restoration project design drawing is currently under review by NRCS.
- With the assistance of MASCD, Harford SCD is preparing a grant application through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation seeking \$75,000 to initiate the creation of a voluntary and incentive-based program administered through Harford SCD. The program will focus on currently underserved landowners with smaller sized properties. Chairman, Lee D. McDaniel, captured the overall objective's intent by stating, "Natural resources conservation should not be limited to agriculture."
- On Saturday, April 22, Harford SCD and NRCS personnel will be staffing a display table at a Maryland Environmental Service's sponsored "Earth Day" event. The event will run from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Harford County Agricultural Center.

Motion for Closed Session

Chair Funk called for a motion for the State Soil Conservation Committee to adjourn the meeting to move into a closed session, pursuant to subsections (b)(7) of the General Provisions Article:

[X] Section 3-305(b)(7): to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice

Motion was made by Amy Posey, second by Bobby Guy.

Roll call of members present:

Van Funk
Bruce Yerkes
Amy Posey
Bobby Guy
Hans Schmidt
Jim George
Darren Jarboe
John Murphy

All vote in support of motion.
The open session was adjourned at 11:24 am

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: April 20, 2023

Members:

Bob Guy
Van Funk
Amy Posey
Bruce Yerkes
Darren Jarboe
Hans W. Schmidt
John Murphy
Jim George

Absent:

Ed Wurmb
Steve Freeman
Suzy Daubert
John Sullivan
James Stanton

Others:

Laura Pleasanton, FSA
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD
John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD
Matt D. McMahon, Carroll SCD
Heather Hutchinson, Catoctin and Frederick SCD
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD
Scott Hipkins, Frederick SCD
Diane Flickinger, Frederick SCD
Richard Glasgow, Wicomico SCD
Luis Diegues, Charles SCD
DeeDee Saunders, Charles SCD
Amanda Pollack, Center Watershed Protection
Matt Rowe, MDE
Rob Schnabel, CBF
Elizabeth Beggins, CBF
Seth Metheny, Garrett SCD

David Plummer, Howard SCD
Gail Myers, PGSCD
John Tarr, PGSCD
Harrison Palmer, 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
Dee Price, Washington Co. SCD
Mark Kendle, Washington Co. SCD
Byron Petrauskas, MDA
Adam Lyon, MDA
Jill Whitcomb, PADEP
Andrew Gavin, SRBC
Genevieve Lister, NRCS
Alisha Mulkey, MDA

SUMMARY OF CLOSED SESSION

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:

Time of closed session: 11:32 – 12:10 pm (April 20) and resumed 10:00 – 10:50 am (May 4)_____

Place (location) of closed session: conference call _____

Purpose of the closed session: to receive legal advice from counsel on issues over which the SSCC has jurisdiction _____

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:

Names of members voting aye: Funk, Posey, Schmidt, Jarboe, Murphy, Guy and Yerkes

Members opposed: none; Members abstaining: none _____

3. Statutory authority to close session:

This meeting was closed under the following provisions of General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b):

→ **Topic #1: § 3-305(b) (7)**

4. Listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

Topic description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
Review, with legal counsel, the next steps to merge two soil conservation districts.	Bobby Guy Hans Schmidt Van Funk Amy Posey John Murphy Darren Jarboe Bruce Yerkes Alisha Mulkey Justin Hayes	Discussion on referendum logistics and potential dates. Materials will be drafted by counsel and will be circulated by April 21 to members. Members will resume closed session on May 4 to finalize. All members concur.