

**State Soil Conservation Committee**  
Final Minutes  
June 15, 2023

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

The minutes of May 2023 were approved. (Posey/Schmidt)

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

### **Discussions**

Bradley Baker, MDE, presented on Secretary McIlwain's priorities for the agency as it relates to agriculture.

Bradley outlined the four following topics:

1. Environmental Justice. The agency is actively using its [EJ map tool](#) in reviewing projects, but the Secretary is also making efforts to visit several underserved communities to be more transparent with the permitting process and to create engagement opportunities. The agency's use of EJ criteria has been included in Maryland law, but currently the agency is only implementing a partial list. In the future, MDE is working to expand the EJ tool to include additional parameters similar to the [UMD tool](#) and methods to incorporate the score into programs beyond notification.
2. Climate Change. For agriculture, this would include increasing opportunities for the land application of organic materials and diversions from landfills.
3. Chesapeake Bay. An emphasis on reducing unpermitted discharges to the Bay, and reducing potential discharges from animal feeding operations.
4. Organizational Excellence. The agency will work to do more with resources (staff and budget) to improve permit processing time, and increase compliance as examples. The latter is consistent with 2022 legislation [HB 649](#) that charges MDE to reduce "significant" noncompliance among permit holders. This can include increased fines, more frequent on-site inspections, and notices of deficiency being documented. **Note** -- For AFO permittees, letters to NOI applicants for permit renewals that are incomplete or inadequate will be mailed ~June 20. Letters will be cc'd to MDA, local SCD, NRCS and the integrator.

Following Bradley's remarks, a Q&A with attendees occurred. Anyone with additional questions can reach Bradley at [bradley.baker1@maryland.gov](mailto:bradley.baker1@maryland.gov)

**ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE:** The referendum to consider combining the Catoctin and Frederick Soil Conservation Districts will be held July 10-14 at the SCD office. Updates will be brought to SSCC at the July meeting.

### **Reports –**

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported on June 1, MDA and UM, announced a new direction for the nutrient management program related to plan writing services from UME. MDA funds previously used toward contractual staff at UME will now primarily be used as cost-share for farmers to work with the private sector. Some staff will remain with UME for specific activities, but plan writing services for most will cease after August 31. MDA Secretary Attacks is holding a series of listening sessions across the state on the program changes and a Summit on July 17 in Annapolis.

A Farmer Advisory Group will be established in the coming months to support MDA program recommendations.

Michael Calkins, previously of the Howard SCD, has been named MDA Assistant Secretary of Plant Industries and Pest Management.

The 2023-2024 signup for cover crop and *Cover Crop Plus* has been announced. Rates for triticale have been increased in the traditional program, and *Cover Crop Plus* has updated the eligible rotation options to better include small grains.

District Operations remains busy recruiting and filling for vacant positions.

Rob Feldt, DNR reported the state forest audit has been completed to renew the “sustainable forest” certification. Maryland Forest Service hosted a legislative tour with the Maryland Forest Association to educate on forest management and economic development activities.

A busy forest fire season is expected across the U.S.

Jim George, MDE no report.

Darren Jarboe, UME reported MDA recently announced they are cutting funding to the University of Maryland (UMD) Nutrient Management program. The advisors in each county that write plans for farmers will no longer be employed after August 31, 2023. MDA is planning to offer cost share assistance to farmers to help offset the costs of having plans written by private industry. MDA will continue to provide limited financial support for UMD nutrient management specialists (4.0 FTE) to support education and research. These specialists will help farmers learn how to write plans and support them in this effort. There will be a limited number of plans written for those with under 50 acres.

MDA is planning a summit to discuss nutrient management issues on July 17.

The Agriculture and Food Systems Extension (AgFS) educator in Charles County and two urban agriculture state specialists have been posted on the UMD jobs site.

Suzy Daubert, NRCS reported the state office has been temporarily moved to the George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, MD. The facility has significant meeting space if any partners need a venue. Staff are working with partners to finalize agreements for the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds coming to the states to expand available CTA

A revised organizational chart for Maryland NRCS has been developed and is under review with staff for feedback.

NRCS job openings have been posted.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported NACD has opened their RFP for 2023 Outreach and Technical Assistance Grants. Four of our SCDs have taken advantage of this opportunity since 2018. This year expands the scope of the grant to focus on outreach to underserved farmers, and may be a particularly good opportunity for districts experiencing capacity challenges in working with smaller farms. NACD is hosting an informational webinar at 4 pm on June 15. More info at <https://www.nacdnet.org/technical-assistance-grants/2023-technical-assistance-grants/>

NRCS Agreement- MASCD, NRCS and MDA are working together to develop a new Cooperative Agreement. This agreement has been used in the past for the SCDs to provide program support and develop CRP/CREP plans. The new agreement expands the list of deliverables to include conservation planning, engineering designs and nutrient management planning. MASCD hosted two webinars with the SCDs to walk through the new deliverables and answer questions. Total funding available for FY24 is ~\$500K. MASCD will develop a statewide agreement with NRCS by June 15 and work with the SCDs over the next several weeks to develop work plans for each district.

NFWF Grant Approved!- MASCD has received tentative approval for our proposal “Accelerating Implementation of Nature-Based Structural Practices on Delmarva”. The project would provide funding to conservation districts in both Maryland and Delaware to implement non-tidal wetland creation projects, floodplain restoration/reconnection projects, shoreline management and riparian buffers in cooperation with landowners and public drainage organizations. The project budget includes \$983,485.80 for implementation, incentives for public drainage organizations, outreach, and staffing. More details to come.

John Murphy, Ag Commission reported there are several nutrient management educational opportunities available this summer.

The Ag Commission is taking a break until September.

Amy Posey, Southern MD reported

Prince George's:

- 2nd Annual Seeding Give Away was held at Darnell's Chance. Tomatoes and Sweet Basil raised from seed by PGSCD Staff were distributed along with information on Soil Conservation.

Area Wide

- The July Area 2 Meeting that proceeds MASCD has been set for July 17th the time will either be afternoon or early evening. Topics are: Nutrient Management Plan writing options, MD 378 Pond Review Process, and Ag Equipment Rental Programs.

Bobby Guy, Lower Shore reported this will be his last meeting as Area Rep for the Lower Shore. Thanks to all for the efforts of SSCC and partners.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD no report.

Van Funk, Central MD

Baltimore County SCD

- District staff are still coordinating with Baltimore County and MDE to establish a Small Pond MOU. Two meetings occurred recently with Baltimore County – the affidavit that MDE has proposed is causing reluctance to move forward with the MOU.
- District staff continue to work with and provide support to the Baltimore County Noxious Weed Program.

Harford SCD

- North Harford High School will be representing Harford County at the State Envirothon Competition which will be held at the Western 4-H Park in Garrett County, Maryland. Harford SCD took the lead to coordinate and assist North Harford High School with arrangements for transportation, lodging, and more.
- Harford SCD and MDA staff completed the 2022-2023 Cover Crop spring certification submissions through MDA's SQL program. Approximately 66 cover crop agreements were spring certified.
- Harford SCD and Harford County Farm Bureau continue to coordinate and plan for an ag tour for the Harford County Council, the Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly, and other local and State dignitaries. The ag tour is scheduled for Wednesday, July 19, 2023.
- The Harford SCD Annual Cooperators Banquet is coming soon. The Harford SCD will be hosting a picnic style dinner at Pond View Farm located in White Hall, Maryland. The banquet's official date will be Wednesday, September 13, 2023. More information will be forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey  
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: June 15, 2023

Members:

Bob Guy  
Van Funk  
Amy Posey  
Bruce Yerkes  
Darren Jarboe  
Ed Wurmb  
John Murphy  
Jim George  
Suzy Daubert  
John Sullivan  
Hans W. Schmidt  
Rob Feldt

Absent:

James Stanton  
Steve Freeman

Others:

Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD  
John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD  
Heather Hutchinson, Catoctin and Frederick SCDs  
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD  
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD  
DeeDee Saunders, Charles SCD  
Diane Flickinger, Frederick SCD  
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD  
Bradley Baker, MDE  
Darren Alles, MDE  
Robert Baldwin, Kent SCD  
Mark W. Carey, Somerset SCD  
Anne-Meredith Webster, Somerset SCD  
Bobby Cooper, St. Mary's SCD  
Haley Carter, St. Mary's SCD  
Dee Price, Washington Co. SCD  
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD  
Byron Petrauskas, MDA  
Bryan Harris, MDA  
Genevieve Lister, NRCS  
Alisha Mulkey, MDA  
Jen Nelson, MASCD  
Tony Riggi, QASCD  
Richard Glasgow, Wicomico SCD