

**State Soil Conservation Committee**  
Final Minutes  
July 20, 2023

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

The minutes of June 2023 were approved. (Posey/Freeman)

**Van Funk was unanimously reappointed as Chair of SSCC for the coming year** (Posey/Jarboe)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:

Howard SCD – Nora Vese (Jarboe/Freeman)  
Talbot SCD – Hannah Harrison (Freeman/Jarboe)  
Washington Co. SCD – James Harp (Freeman/Posey)  
Wicomico SCD – Steve White (Freeman/Yerkes)

### **Discussions**

Rachel Lamb, MDE, presented on the state's progress toward a goal of 5 Million Trees as established in the Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021. Through the legislation, MDE has been charged to lead the coordination across state agencies to track and report implementation toward the goal. MDE is also developing a website (<https://five-million-tree-tracking-tool-maryland.hub.arcgis.com/>) for agencies to share resources with the public such as funding opportunities and tree planting guidance. The website will also contain a dashboard to show progress toward the goal. Rachel demonstrated the website for interested partners looking for technical assistance or additional information.

Following Rachel's presentation, Anne Gilbert, acting Program Manager for Urban Forestry, DNR, provided updates on DNR's initiatives to support the 5 Million Trees goal. DNR has hired Justin ("JT") Bowers to oversee DNR program responsibilities, including the 13 contractual positions provided to DNR to support 5 Million Trees. Eight of the thirteen positions have been filled – 5 local tree planting specialists, 2 supervisors, and 1 nursery manager. The remaining positions are open for recruitment. Staff are focusing on connecting landowners with available financial and technical assistance to complete tree plantings, and to provide technical assistance to the Chesapeake Bay Trust for urban tree plantings. DNR is also collaborating with MDOT on tree plantings in targeted state areas.

Following the presentations, SSCC members and attendees had Q&A with the speakers.

**ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE:** The referendum to consider combining the Catoctin and Frederick Soil Conservation Districts was held July 10-14 at the SCD office. Over 200 ballots were submitted with the majority in favor of combining the SCDs. Additional discussion will occur at the SSCC September meeting.

### **Reports –**

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported on 16 new awardees through the new Healthy Soils Competitive Fund. District Operations remains busy recruiting and filling for vacant positions. MDA Secretary Atticks completed a series of listening sessions across the state on the nutrient management 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, and UM and MDA continue to align next steps.

Rob Feldt, DNR reported (via email) DNR Park Service and Forestry staff have started a mentor project with teens from Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) facilities in western Maryland. The project is designed to have the teens learn skills working alongside DNR staff a couple of days each week. The

first crew assisted with invasive plant removal at Sang Run State Park and enjoyed their day at the park. Park staff were pleased with their work.

Jim George, MDE reported MDE and DNR have issued new joint guidance on small dam removal. Additional information for the SSCC will be brought to a future meeting.

Darren Jarboe, UME reported the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) announced at the Nutrient Management Summit on July 17 that the University of Maryland (UMD) Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) will be retained (see news release below). UMD will work to retain the nutrient management advisors across the state who write plans for farmers. The ANMP has moved from the Department of Environmental Science and Technology to University of Maryland Extension's Agriculture and Food Systems Program.

Dr. Jerry Brust, vegetable IPM state specialist, will retire August 31. He has served Maryland and Mid-Atlantic fruit and vegetable growers since 2005. Jerry conducted applied research on nutrient and pest management for growing commercial vegetable crops. He has been an excellent resource for AgFS educators across Maryland.

Dr. Sarah Potts, dairy and beef state specialist, resigned her position and her last day is July 31. She joined the AgFS Program four years ago, conducting applied research on dairy and beef cattle and offering research-based education programs for producers.

Initial interviews for the urban agriculture production and urban agriculture farm and agribusiness management state specialists will take July 25 and 31. Initial interviews for the AgFS educator position in Charles County will be in August.

Suzy Daubert, NRCS no report.

John Sullivan, FSA reported crop acreage reporting has been completed. Staff are next focused on CRP/CREP offers and re-enrollments due by July 31.

New financial assistance is available for producers with discriminatory loan concerns, and for dairy producers seeking organic marketing assistance.

John participated in a Harford SCD legislative tour on July 19 that was very successful.

Jen Nelson, MASCD reported

NRCS Agreement- MASCD is hearing from the conservation districts about their requests for funding to provide technical assistance under a new agreement with NRCS. Districts requested funds to write 64 conservation plans, 143 CREP/CRP plans, 52 engineering designs and project checkouts, 111 nutrient management plans, as well provide administrative support for Farm Bill programs and provide outreach and education. The requests exceed the amount of available funding by about 20% or \$100,000, so the next step is to review the requests and determine where we can cut back based on greatest need, equity and capacity.

NACD Summer Meeting- Jen Nelson and Frank Richardson attended NACD's Summer Meeting in Bismarck, ND. NACD has expanded its staff significantly, and a number of the new staff don't have a background in agriculture and conservation. If any of our districts are hosting field days this summer, it would be a great opportunity for some of their Washington DC staff to get out in the field and learn about agriculture. Let Jen know if you have something on the calendar and if it would be possible to extend invitations to NACD staff.

Dates & Deadlines:

July 31 Deadline for room block at MASCD Annual Meeting

August 1 Deadline for 2023 Leopold Conservation Award Nominations

August 4 Deadline for registration for MASCD Annual Meeting

August 27 – 29 2023 MASCD Annual Meeting at the Hyatt in Cambridge

September 17- 20 NACD Northeast Region Meeting in Portland, ME

October 24 MASCD Board of Directors Meeting

John Murphy, Ag Commission suggested new outreach efforts to connect the nursery and landscape community to the state's 5 Million Trees goal.  
The Ag Commission is taking a break until September.

Amy Posey, Southern MD reported

District Wide

- The Area 2 MASCD Summer meeting occurred on July 17th from 6-7:30. Topics were committee nominations, Nutrient Management Plan, Pond Review Process Update, and Ag Equipment Rental Programs.
- All Districts were in attendance at both the Southern Area Listening Session in Charles Headquarters and the Summit held at AACC.
- All Districts had High Schools compete in the Envirothon. Making up  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the participants: Calvert (3rd), Anne Arundel (5th), PG (8th), St. Mary's (9th), Charles (12th)

Anne Arundel:

- Promoted former secretary Mary Ford to office manager, hired new secretary to start soon.
- Seven beaver analogs completed and beavers are moving in. Will be planting additional small trees for food and use.
- Cooperator of the Year Dinner will be held on October 18th.

Calvert:

- Equine census in conjunction with MDA to extend help and encourage cooperators status in the District.
- Ron Babcock who does urban and commercial reviews is retiring and has been training Ryan.
- Still need an area tech
- Currently working on oyster bar restoration
- Hiring EMS specialist
- Shoreline support for break waters at Breezy Point camp, working 24/7, already have had noise complaints but most neighbors realize that they will be done sooner.

Charles:

- Practice Keeper Update, 1 year in and doing really well
- Secretary Sue is retiring after 35 years.
- NACD grant funded planner
- County Funded engineer is doing so well.
- Through funding they are increasing the equipment in their ag rental program Prince George's:
- Thanking the staff for 50+ contracts and 100s of thousands of dollars awarded.
- Incubator farm is at full capacity with 12 operators, they have produced 4K lbs of produce and 350 volunteer hours
- There was a quail habitat workshop held this morning that seems very popular.

St. Mary's:

- After losing a candidate to another offer, ENS position filled on the 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Coloring Contest needs to be submitted before MASCD to be considered.
- Large project at PAX river coastline where they will do the shoreline and construction review.
- MS4 Stormwater management with DPWT, ponds with no change to spill ways and under an acre they are notified but it has greatly sped up the process.

Steve Freeman, Upper Shore reported a very strong sign-up for the 2023-2024 cover crop season.

Dee Price, on behalf of Western MD reported a new urban planner in Washington County SCD. Staff are finalizing the cover crop sign-up applications.

Washington County has selected two new properties for forest conservation easements.

Van Funk, Central MD

Baltimore County SCD

- District drafted a MOU with Baltimore County regarding Small Ponds. The County is currently reviewing the MOU.
- The DM and DC met with Baltimore County to develop a policy for permitting for Ag Buildings.
- Staff and supervisors attended the Central Area Meeting on July 12th.

Howard SCD

- A new Soil Conservation Planner will be hired to replace Michael Calkins, who accepted the position of Assistant Secretary for Plant Industries and Pest Management at MDA.
- Howard SCD will sponsor an educational booth at the Howard County Fair from August 5-12.
- Howard SCD's Cooperators Dinner will be held on Thursday, September 21 at Manor Hill Farm Brewery.

Cecil SCD

- No Report

Harford SCD

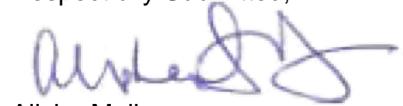
- With the 2023-2024 Traditional Cover Crop sign up ending, an estimated 73 cooperators signed up to participate from Harford County.
- On Wednesday, July 19, 2023, Harford SCD and Harford County Farm Bureau provided an ag tour for the Harford County Council, the Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly, and other local and State dignitaries. We visited five (5) farms with multiple implemented best management practices. Harford Land Trust and Harford County Ag Land Preservation office provided presentations as well.
- During July 23-29, 2023, the North Harford High School Envirothon Team, who is representing Maryland, will be competing in the National Envirothon Competition in New Brunswick, Canada. The Team is poised to compete hard and represent Maryland well.
- Invitations for the upcoming Cooperators Banquet will be sent out soon. This year, the Harford SCD will be hosting a picnic style dinner at Pond View Farm located in White Hall, Maryland. The banquet's official date is Wednesday, September 13, 2023.

Montgomery SCD

- The District will sponsor a Commodity Cover Crop Program again this year. The District provides a flat \$15.00 per acre for farmers choosing to participate. The program eligibility requires both a current Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and Nutrient Management Plan. The signup dates coincide with MDA's Traditional Cover Crop Program.
- The District's Cooperators Dinner will be held at Lone Oak Farm Brewery on September 19 from 5 to 8 pm. The District will be sending out invitations soon.
- The District will be staffing an agricultural and conservation exhibit at the Montgomery County Fair from August 11-19.
- The District completed its first small pond review for a MD378 exemption for a County community neighborhood pond retrofit project.
- The District has encountered several producers caught in limbo with getting their Nutrient Management plans current. These plans were formerly prepared by extension and while the District will try to assist these cooperators in getting their plans current, some will miss the cover crop application deadline as they do not have all their soil or tissue samples analyzed and ready for our plan writer to assist in writing the plan.

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey  
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: July 20, 2023

Members:

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

Absent:

Ed Wurmb  
Rob Feldt

Others:

John Czajkowski, Anne Arundel SCD  
Matt McMahon, Carroll SCD  
Heather Hutchinson, Catoctin and Frederick SCDs  
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD  
DeeDee Saunders, Charles SCD  
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD  
David Plummer, Howard SCD  
Heather Zdobysz, PGSCD  
Bruce Young, St. Mary's SCD  
Dee Price, Washington Co. SCD  
Mark Kindle, Washington Co. SCD  
Colleen Keiffer, NRCS  
Mark W. Carey, Somerset SCD  
Genevieve Lister, NRCS  
Anne Gilbert, DNR  
Adam Lyon, MDA  
Byron Petruskas, MDA  
Rachel Lamb, MDE  
Marie Panday, MDE  
Eileen Beard, PGSCD  
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD  
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD  
Alisha Mulkey, MDA  
Jen Nelson, MASCD