

## State Soil Conservation Committee

Final Minutes  
January 18, 2024

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

Approval of the December minutes, 2024 Work Plan and appointments were delayed because an SSCC quorum was not present.

### Discussions

Alisha Mulkey, SSCC, reviewed the draft 2024 Work Plan prepared by SSCC members. Questions and feedback occurred with attendees, and the Work Plan will be presented at the winter MASCD meeting. Approval will occur at the February SSCC meeting.

Martin Proulx, MDA was introduced as the new Value-Added Specialist for the department. This is a new role created at MDA in 2023. Martin reviewed the definitions of value-added products and agritourism, both of which are growing industries in Maryland to diversify farm operations and revenues.

Martin's primary role is a central point of contact for individuals, legislators, state and local government to navigate the many paths to create a value-added business. Martin's intention is to create clarity and continuity for producers. Examples of initiatives underway in this role include:

- Creation of a seminar series for producers on navigating the business venture process for value-added from product licensing, local zoning, local and state permits, food quality and health department roles;
- Increasing coordination among county Ag Marketing Professionals and the local Economic Developments offices;
- A library of legal tools and resources to increase producer knowledge of value-added regulations;
- Unifying regulations for on-farm licensing and processing in the state;
- Expanding and diversifying markets for the Maryland's Best enterprises;
- Overseeing grants to expand production, e.g. middle supply chain infrastructure; and
- Partnering on a new USDA Cooperative Agreement to issue grants for specialty crops that would increase production and infrastructure capacity (e.g. cold storage)

Following Martin's remarks, attendees participated in Q&A.

### Reports

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported a busy 2024 legislative session is underway. MDA has submitted a departmental bill that would increase fees across some regulatory programs, many of which have not been updated for ~20 years.

The Governor's FY25 budget was just released, and staff are reviewing details. More information will be provided at the winter MASCD meeting.

The Chesapeake Bay Program and Gov. Moore remain focused on the released CESR report that will re-evaluate where and how the restoration progress is measured.

Jim George, MDE no report.

Darren Jarboe, UM Extension reported ANMP continues to write nutrient management plans for farmers statewide. ANMP has received requests for 467 nutrient management plans and about 35% have been completed. ANMP updates were presented at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Nutrient Management Advisory Committee meeting on November 21, and Nutrient Management Updates in Annapolis on December 19 and Midway on January 9.

The Agriculture and Food Systems Extension (AgFS) In-Service took place on December 15. An AgFS-focused futuring activity was facilitated by Dr. Marie Ruemenapp, Extension specialist and co-director of the Michigan State University Extension Urban Collaborators Program managed by the Urban and Regional Planning Program. This was the initial step in the AgFS strategic planning process for 2025–29. A preliminary future ANMP model was developed by a subcommittee of Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) faculty and staff. From that model, draft legislation to permanently fund the ANMP is being developed. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources administration is supportive of this effort. LEAD Maryland Class XIII has been selected and will start the program in late February. Class XII will visit Panama for its international experience in early February.

The Agricultural Law Education Initiative held the Agriculture and Environmental Law Conference in Annapolis on November 16.

Jim Lewis, AgFS educator in Caroline County, announced his retirement effective December 31, 2023.

The position will be refilled. The AgFS Program has 12 positions in various stages of recruitment.

Candidates have been selected for the urban agriculture farm and agribusiness management specialist and urban agriculture production specialist positions and are proceeding through human resources processing. The Charles County AgFS educator has been reposted on eTerp, the UMD employment website, and is open to receive applications. The best consideration date is January 31. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and ruminant livestock specialist positions are expected to be posted on eTerp around March 1. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description is being revised and will post in late spring. The ANMP continues to recruit and hire people for positions. Kayla Griffith has been hired as a faculty specialist to train advisors, farmers, and private plan writers and provide consultations. The ANMP program director job announcement was submitted to human resources in late October and is expected to start accepting applications on the University of Maryland eTerp website later this week. Nineteen people were invited for nutrient management advisor job interviews. Six offers were made and four were accepted. Seven temporary advisors have been hired, most of which are experienced plan writers. Some of these have been offered full-time positions. The coordinator (nutrient management advisor) announcement reposted on eTerp and is open to receive applications. There are positions available in Caroline, Montgomery, Wicomico/Worcester, and Washington Counties, and statewide. The best consideration date for these positions is February 4. Recruiting will continue until the positions are filled. The ANMP program coordinator position was submitted to human resources.

Christin Redding was hired as program coordinator for the Agriculture Law Education Initiative. She was previously project manager/alumni engagement and communications specialist for The U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

Dr. Darren Jarboe's five-year review was completed and he signed a new five-year contract.

John Swaine, MASCD reported he recently gave testimony at Maryland legislature on behalf of MASCD. The winter meeting is scheduled for January 22-23 in Annapolis, and a hearing on SB 196 (fees for small pond reviews) will be held January 23.

Upcoming events are the Delmarva Soil Summit, annual NACD conference, NACD fly-in, MASCD Board of Directors on March 26, and MASCD annual meeting July 8-10.

The Cooperative Agreement between NRCS and MASCD is still not complete.

Funding for new signage for the Bay Friendly Farming (formerly FSCAP) program has been secured.

Amy Posey, Southern MD reported

Calvert SCD

- Candidates for the Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist will be interviewed next week.
- The District Manager position has gone live to the public.

St. Mary's SCD

- Will be hiring an Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist.

Van Funk, Central MD reported

Baltimore County SCD

- The Secretary of Agriculture attended the BCSCD December Board Meeting. It was a productive meeting with good discussions.
- The District is working with Baltimore County to increase the amount of grant funds they receive from the County.
- The District held their annual meeting with the Baltimore County erosion & sediment control inspectors in December.

Cecil SCD

- The Cecil SCD cooperators banquet was held on January 12<sup>th</sup>. There were over 230 in attendance to honor the Spry Brothers as the cooperators of the year.

Harford SCD

- On December 19, 2023, Harford SCD technicians Andrew League and Eric Webberking submitted flat rate recommendations for the MACS flat rate updates for the Central Area. These recommendations were incorporated into the approved Central Region MACS Flat Rates for CY24. The new flat rates went into effect January 1, 2024.
- On January 6, 2024, 50 students from eight (8) local high schools participated in the Envirothon 5<sup>th</sup> Topic "Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future" training exercise. Megan Knight, Channel 2 Baltimore (WMAR), spoke to the students and gave pointers on public speaking. Andrew Cassilly, former MD House of Delegate/Governor Hogan's staff, led the 5<sup>th</sup> Topic training.
- The January edition of "The Harford Resource" newsletter will be coming soon. It will have a new look and this edition will include HSCD's 2023 annual report figures.

Howard SCD

- Howard SCD Supervisors and Staff attended the County Executive's press conference to officially announce the formation of a Howard County Office of Agriculture. Howard County is the third county in MD to officially establish an Office of Agriculture to assist farmers and rural landowners, promote agricultural education, and facilitate coordination between various agencies and the agricultural community.
- Howard SCD received \$200K from the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program to continue promoting conservation practices by increasing the cost-share reimbursement rate on approved BMPs to closer to 95% of actual out-of-pocket costs. The program has led to a considerable uptick in requests for assistance on a variety of conservation projects.

Montgomery SCD

- No report

Terry Nuwer, Lower Shore MD reported the Dorchester SCD has updated their flat rates.  
Mr. Steele Phillips passed away on January 14. He was very involved in Dorchester SCD, MASCD, and SSSC in earlier years.  
Lower Shore Ag Day is scheduled for January 26 in Princess Anne.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD reported Catoclin and Frederick SCDs are hosting "Digging Deeper into Soil Health" on February 28, 2024. Dale Strickler is the featured speaker and topics include: Creating a drought resilient, year-around pasture system, Weather-proofing your soil, cover crops and carbon farming. Register here <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/3rd-annual-digging-deeper-into-soil-health-tickets-776923367707?aff=oddtcreator>

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey  
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: January 18, 2024

Members:

Van Funk  
Darren Jarboe  
Jim George  
Ed Wurmb  
John Swaine  
Hans W. Schmidt  
Terry Nuwer  
John Sullivan

Absent:

Amy Posey  
John Murphy  
Rob Feldt  
Steve Freeman  
Suzy Daubert

Others:

Tom Filbert, OAG  
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD  
David Scheler, Anne Arundel SCD  
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD  
Heather Hutchinson, Catoclin and Frederick SCD  
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD  
Dee Dee Saunders, Charles SCD  
Tim Wells, Charles SCD  
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD  
Diane Flickinger, Frederick SCD  
James "Smokey" Stanton, Garrett SCD  
David Plummer, Howard SCD  
Byron Petrauskas, MDA  
Steve Darcey, PGSCD  
Gail Myers, PGSCD  
Mark Carey, Somerset SCD  
Dee Price, Washington County SCD  
Lori Flock Bishop, Washington County SCD  
Mark Kendle, Washington County SCD  
Richard Glasgow, Wicomico SCD  
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD  
Jen Nelson, MASCD  
Alisha Mulkey, MDA