

## State Soil Conservation Committee

Final Minutes

February 15, 2024

Amy Posey, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

The minutes of December 2023 and January 2024 were approved. (Wurmb/Swaine)

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

Caroline SCD – Chris Harris (Swaine/Wurmb)  
Cecil SCD – Victor Priapi (Swaine/Feldt)  
St. Mary's SCD – Stanley Boothe (Swaine/Jarboe)  
Worcester SCD – David Hudson (Feldt/Swaine)

The SSCC 2024 Work Plan was approved (Swaine/Posey)

### Discussions

Alisha Mulkey, SSCC, reviewed information received from several Districts regarding their role in the enforcement of Maryland's certified sod laws. As a reminder, the Maryland sod industry is experiencing hardship when Maryland certified sod is not being installed at development sites, as required by state law. The issue has been elevated to MDA leadership and the Ag Commission, and a request was made for the SSCC to consider the role (if any) of SCDs in the enforcement process for certified sod. Based on feedback from several Districts, the enforcement authority and inspection duties generally lie with MDE or the county. However, some Districts do hold pre-construction site meetings and use this opportunity to review requirements from MDE's 2011 E&S manual, which includes specifications and standards for certified sod installation. **Districts are encouraged to coordinate with the respective authority in their county to remind them of the requirements for state certified sod.** An example checklist is available from Frederick County. Alisha will provide follow up materials to the Districts, including the relevant state laws for the production of certified sod and the 2011 E&S manual with relevant sections.

Michael Mason, Providence Strategies, reviewed relevant legislation to-date in the 2024 Maryland session. Over 2000 bills have been filed at this time between the House and Senate. Michael reviewed the economic outlook for the state that is influencing budget decisions, and talked through the following bills of key interest to the Districts:

- House Bill 0003 | Senate Bill 356 - Land Use - Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing - Requirements
- House Bill 0022 | Senate Bill 178 - Agriculture - Pollinator Habitat Plan - Requirements for State Highway Administration
- House Bill 0094 | Senate Bill 187 - Correctional Services - Inmate Employment - Agricultural Work
- Senate Bill 196 | House Bill 1465 - Soil Conservation Districts - Small Ponds - Plan Review Fees
- House Bill 234 | Senate Bill 278 - Department of Agriculture - Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation
- House Bill 235 | Senate Bill 253 - Department of Natural Resources - Pay-For-Success Contracts - Procurement Exemption
- House Bill 350 | Senate Bill 360 - Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2025)
- House Bill 1042 | Senate Bill 932 - Maryland Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program - Established

- House Bill 991 | Senate Bill 1074 - Environment - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit - Establishment
- House Bill 1017 - Boundary of the Frederick Soil Conservation District – Alteration
- House Bill 1320 (new) would change the Bay Restoration Fund funding level provided to MDA's Cover Crop program from a percentage annually (current) to "an amount equal to FY24" (proposed)

Following Michael's presentation, attendees participated in Q&A.

## Reports

Hans Schmidt, MDA reported a busy 2024 legislative session is underway. MDA is monitoring over 100 bills. The state's tight economic outlook means legislators are seeking to shift funds for new program uses.

Nutrient Management, in consultation with UMD, will allow top dressing of small grains to begin. The Cover Crop TAC will meet March 6 at MDA. Each region is being asked to send 1 rep only. MDA's hearing on the Operating Budget was recently held and it went well. The Capital Budget hearing is next week.

Sec. Atticks is chairing an Ag Action Team for the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Action Team will consider the need and role of an Ag Advisory Committee to be established.

A call for volunteers for the HPAI team has been released.

Rob Feldt, DNR reported a new Associate Director for the 5M Tree Initiative has been hired. The department is seeking to partner with NRCS on site index reviews for buffer plantings to better discern variable buffer width needs.

DNR continues to make progress toward tree planting goals, but is not pursuing prime aglands or revoking agland leases.

Jim George, MDE reported a concern from the air quality administration at MDE about mortality incinerators being present on farms without permits.

Darren Jarboe, UM Extension reported The University of Maryland Statewide Extension Advisory Council (SEAC) met virtually on February 13 to discuss unmet needs and opportunities, strategic partnerships, and UME program priorities for the next five years. The next SEAC meeting will be October 8.

University of Maryland Eastern Shore and University of Maryland, College Park had their semiannual meeting to share applied research and educational programs, coordinate Extension efforts, and identify collaboration opportunities.

Dr. Xuan Wei started as urban agriculture farm and agribusiness management specialist on February 12.

Dr. Qianwen Lu will start as urban agriculture production specialist in mid-March. Both have statewide responsibilities and will be located at CMREC-Clarksville.

The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has received requests for 723 nutrient management plans and 40% of these have been completed. All the information needed to write nutrient management plans has been received for 58% of the requests and 69% of these have been delivered to farmers.

LEAD Maryland Class XII visited Panama in February for its international experience. Class XIII starts its program on February 22 in Cecil County. LEAD Maryland will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary that day.

The AgFS Program has 10 positions in various stages of recruitment. Charles County AgFS educator candidates have been selected for initial interviews. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and

ruminant livestock specialist positions are expected to post on eTerp around March 1. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description has been submitted to human resources and will post in late spring. The faculty specialist, ANMP program director announcement is accepting applications and has a best consideration date of February 18. Sixteen applications were received for the five open nutrient management advisor positions in Caroline, Montgomery, Wicomico/Worcester, and Washington Counties, and statewide. Nine of the candidates will be interviewed in late February or early March. AgFS winter educational programming continues.

Suzy Daubert, NRCS reported USDA has released a new tool to support TSPs writing Nutrient Management Plans. She will reach out to UM Extension and MDA to review the tool.

USDA has announced creation of a Climate Corps nationally.

Several Districts have experienced connection issues with Conservation Desktop (CD). The national office is reviewing these for network issues in the office, but in the interim it is recommended avoiding MS Teams use while also trying to access CD.

Bob Wevodau for FSA, reported the 2018 Farm Bill has been extended through September 30. Staff are waiting to hear about new program guidance.

March 15 is the ARC PLC deadline.

Signup for the dairy margin coverage program will open soon.

CRP is open for new offers, and CREP re-enrollment offers are underway.

John Swaine, MASCD reported the winter meeting will be held February 22-23 in Annapolis.

The next BOD meeting will be March 26 and MASCD annual meeting July 8-10.

The NACD fly-in will be March 20.

Amy Posey, Southern MD reported

Calvert:

- The District Manager position will be having interviews soon.
- Calvert SCD Cooperator of the Year Dinner will be on March 21st.

Charles:

- Envirothon training was held on February 6th.
- Charles SCD's annual dinner will be held on May 22nd
- Charles SCD's grant-funded planner attended the NACD annual meeting in San Diego.

Prince George's:

- The PGSCD Annual Cooperator Dinner will be held on April 19th. Invitations will be sent in mid-March.
- PGSD attended the Delmarva Soil Summit, PGSCD encourages every SCD in MD to attend when it comes back around in 2026.
- PGSCD is moving ahead with the 5-year USDA Climate Smart Commodities grant. Prince George's Dept of Environment is the grant recipient. PGSCD, UM Extension, PG Food Equity Council, and Bowie State College are partners on the grant.
- This month PGSCD will begin working with a second group of UM College Park seniors from the School of Information Sciences on a capstone project mapping ponds in the rural farm area. The first round of mapping was completed last semester and identified 80 ponds in two of our prominent farming (four-digit) watersheds.
- The PGSCD Urban Development section has been conducting bi-weekly pre-submission meetings with several of the largest engineering consultants in an attempt to reduce the number

of submissions it takes to get approval for Concept, Environmental, and Final Erosion and sediment control plans.

- PGSCD is now accepting electronic payments and electronic plan submissions.
- Plan to conduct our second “Round table discussion on land use processes” in late April or early May. following legislation session and our annual dinner.

St. Mary’s:

- The St. Mary’s SCD 69th annual Cooperator’s dinner will be held on Friday, February 23, 2024 at the Bay District VFD in Lexington Park. Reservations are due on Friday, February 16, 2024.
- District staff will participate in the annual Easter Festival at the Leonardtown Fairgrounds on Saturday, March 23, 2024. The District will be popping and selling Kettle corn for the local Envirothon program.
- St. Mary’s will host MOSH (Maryland Occupation Safety and Health) training on Wednesday, February 21, 2024. The training is geared for partnership technical staff. Interested individuals should contact Mike Montillo, NRCS Engineering Technician.

Van Funk, Central MD reported

Harford:

- On January 17, Harford SCD sent out its latest edition of “The Harford Resource” newsletter. Our newsletter has a new look and design.
- On January 26, Mr. Worley Gene Umbarger, Sr. passed away at the age of 92. Eugene was dedicated to his family, church, and Harford County agriculture. He ran the family dairy farm until 1986. Eugene served on the Harford SCD Board of Supervisors, and he chaired the SSCC as well. He lived a full life and was highly revered by all who knew him.
- On February 10, eight (8) high schools participated in the Harford County Envirothon “5th Topic Presentations – Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future”. There were 5 Judges for the Presentations – two were Board of Education members, two were Harford Soil Conservation District members, and one professional engineer. Students did a great job with their presentations and demonstrated themselves in a professional manner.

Ed Wurmb, Western MD no report

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey  
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: February 15, 2024

Members:

Darren Jarboe  
Jim George  
Ed Wurmb  
John Swaine  
Hans W. Schmidt  
Amy Posey  
Rob Feldt  
Suzy Daubert

Absent:

John Murphy  
Steve Freeman  
Van Funk  
Terry Nuwer  
John Sullivan

Others:

Byron Petrauskas, MDA  
Keith Potter, MDA  
Matt McMahon, Carroll SCD  
Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD  
Ashley Brown, Calvert SCD  
Diane Flickinger, Frederick County SCD  
Heather Hutchinson, Frederick County SCD  
Dee Dee Saunders, Charles SCD  
Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD  
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD  
James "Smokey" Stanton, Garrett SCD  
Seth Metheny, Garrett SCD  
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD  
Steve Darcey, PGSCD  
Gail Myers, PGSCD  
Kim Rush Lynch, PGSCD  
Anthony Riggi, QASCD  
Dee Price, Washington County SCD  
Hunter Phillips, Worcester SCD  
Richard Glasgow, Wicomico SCD  
Harrison Palmer, MDA  
Genevieve Lister, NRCS  
Bruce Young, St. Mary's SCD  
Tim Wells, Charles SCD  
Mark Kendle, Washington County SCD  
Robert Wevodau, FSA  
Alisha Mulkey, MDA