

**State Soil Conservation Committee**  
Final Minutes  
March 21, 2024

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

The minutes of February 2024 were approved. (Nuwer/Freeman)

The following appointments were made upon proper motion, second, and vote:  
Montgomery SCD – Tom Linthicum (Nuwer/Jarboe)  
Prince George's SCD – Andrew Colevas (Nuwer/Wurmb)

### **Updates**

Jason Keppler, MDA, updated SSCC and attendees that new regulations for MACS funding will become effective on April 15. Under the new regulations, funding limits will be \$200K per project and \$450K per person for "active" contracts. These caps will be applied to animal waste treatment practices. For other practice types, no limits/caps will be imposed. Cost-share for start-ups and expansions will be limited to 50% on all practices.

Staff will be hosting a series of webinars in April to review information in more detail.

Alisha Mulkey, SSCC, reminded members that ethics filings are due April 30. She will email the list of financial institutions that have done business with the state for proper disclosure.

The position of Executive Secretary, SSCC has been advertised. This will create a full-time position (currently only at 25%) to transition Alisha and Shawn Burgess' duties into one position. Alisha will supervise the new staff person. This should allow greater focus on the needs of SSCC and Boards moving forward.

### **Discussions**

Van Funk, SSCC Chair, introduced today's discussion for an issue elevated by the SCDs. Over the past year. There is a need for clarity and guidance, but today's discussion is informational only. The issue is a perceived "grey area" when woodlots (>1 acre) are being cleared to return to ag production. In such cases, forest harvest standards/permits are being largely followed for the initial clearing, but during the grubbing/stump clearing it is unclear 1) what are the E&S requirements during this phase; 2) does it require a permit and NOI?; and 3) who is the primary oversight authority during this phase? The latter is especially inconsistent among the county's feedback to the SCDs and whether this is/is not an "agricultural activity". There are no NRCS practices that would readily go into a conservation plan to address this phase.

Ray Bahr, Deputy Program Manager at MDE, expressed his appreciation for bringing this conversation to the attention of MDE. They have not heard from the counties on any concerns. MDE does agree that forest harvesting requires E&S controls. The need and requirements of a grading permit are the local county domain but would often require a SWM plan for large acreage. As far as considering the activity "agricultural" during this transitional land use period, that is an open question. MDE appreciates discussion today and recommends a workflow chart be created for the partnership to guide involved parties.

Dan Rider, DNR Forest Service, shared that forest harvesting is not forest clearing. The former is a selective cutting with the intention to re-establish the ground in timber. Clearing to bring the land into a different future land use is inconsistent with the regs and intent of a forest harvest permit, but Dan recognizes guidance is less clear. Forest clearing should require a grading permit. He and Dan Coy at DNR would be interested in helping to develop the workflow chart.

Eric Hines, NRCS, shared that such activities cannot be included in a conservation plan as no NRCS conservation practice exists to cover the activity. Note, NRCS 460 (land clearing) is not an approved Maryland practice standard.

Following these opening remarks, several attendees talked through scenarios and processes in their respective county for the land clearing activity. Future guidance should consider those seeking guidance from the SCDs as compared to owners that clear without permission or permits. FSA reminded attendees that the FSA 1026 form is required for new land under cultivation. It must be reviewed for HEL or wetland determination. Failure to complete the form or initiate activity in these areas will risk eligibility in FSA programs.

Van thanked everyone for their input.  
SSCC will review the information and take the lead on next steps.

## **Reports**

Byron Petrauskas for MDA reported MDA has completed an equine spotlight/commercial that will be running on MPT soon and complement conservation outreach efforts to the equine sector.

Becky Remsberg has joined MDA as the MD Conservation Partnership Coordinator. She will focus on outreach with the SCDs and equine.

The 1-on-1 meetings with SCDs have been scheduled to review annual WIP Progress. Board members are encouraged to attend.

The annual MDA meeting for District Operations is scheduled for May 14.

A busy 2024 legislative session is underway, and we will provide a legislative update at future meetings.

Rob Feldt, DNR reported DNR hosted a joint training with MDE on non-tidal wetlands and forest harvest regs. on the Lower Shore. About 22 staff attended.

Today is the International Day of Forests and April 3 is MD Arbor Day.

We are at the midpoint of the fire season.

Jim George, MDE emphasized a note from the air quality administration at MDE about mortality incinerators being present on farms and may need permits. An email contact at MDE will be shared for questions.

Darren Jarboe, UM Extension reported University of Maryland Extension (UME) is preparing for a USDA Civil Rights Review. UME is also undergoing a departmental review, which includes an internal self-study and an external review. The external review will take place in May.

The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) has received requests for 994 nutrient management plans and 47% of these have been completed. All the information needed to write nutrient management plans has been received for 65% of the requests and 72% of these have been delivered to farmers.

LEAD Maryland Class XIII Fellows traveled to Cecil County to participate in Seminar 1 that focused on the horse industry. Class XIII and LEAD Maryland alumni celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program.

The AgFS Program has 10 positions in various stages of recruitment. The initial interviews for the Charles County AgFS educator position were conducted March 18 and 19 and four finalists have been selected to present in the county. The AgFS vegetable production specialist and ruminant livestock specialist

positions have posted on eTerp and have a best consideration date of March 30. The Caroline County AgFS educator position description has been announced for internal reassignment.

The faculty specialist, ANMP program director best consideration date has been pushed back to April 4 due to a lack of qualified candidates. Nine applicants were interviewed for the five open nutrient management advisor positions in Caroline, Montgomery, Wicomico/Worcester, and Washington Counties, and statewide. Offers are in the process of being made to candidates.

AgFS winter educational programming has been completed. Spring field days will start soon.

#### Grants

- Kumar, Hemendra, et al. 2024. Quantifying actual nutrient load reduction in drainage structures. Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology. \$95,560.
- Baltimore County 4-H. 2024. Agri-science workshops. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$800.
- Burk, Amy. 2024. Raise awareness for Maryland animal agriculture through a self-guided walking tour of the ANSC Campus Farm. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$1,000.
- Frederick County Extension. 2024. Help a Title 1 school participate in hands-on agricultural experiences, learning about grain production, utilization and the importance of grain products. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$999.
- Institute of Applied Agriculture. 2024. Procure an additional drone for a new course. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$959.
- Maryland 4-H Foundation, Inc. 2024. Growing a Prepared and Sustainable Workforce through the 4-H Internships. Maryland Agriculture Council. \$2,500.

Suzy Daubert, NRCS shared that Leon Tillman has accepted a new position at HQ. Kendrick Flowers will be serving as the Acting Bay Coordinator in the interim. Jackie Byers will serve Field Operations on the Eastern Shore and S. MD.

Sherri Degraphenreed is acting State Con for Programs.

Recruitment for CSP, RCPP and AMA Programs are underway, along with GIS and State Engineer positions.

Suzy has reviewed the engineering workload for the state with special attention to the backlog on the Eastern Shore. Help is coming.

Laura Pleasanton for FSA reported signup for the dairy margin coverage program is open through April 29.

General CRP is open for new offers through March 29, and then Grassland CRP offers will start.

A training schedule for CRP/CREP 101 is being finalized and will be announced soon.

FSA will also be hiring a new Outreach Coordinator.

Jen Nelson for MASCD reported deadlines are coming up for MASCD Awards and Annual Meeting. Since our meeting is about 6 weeks earlier this year, all of our deadlines are moved up too. Award nominations are due by April 18. Early registration for the meeting closes on May 17 and the hotel room block closes on June 17. Thank you to Farm Credit, Dorchester SCD, Washington SCD, Wicomico SCD, and Worcester SCD for sponsoring the meeting!

MASCD received a request to sign on to a letter to Congressman Harris, who recently added language to

managers communicate to view the letter and consider signing on by April 5 at, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScV6f18xA36LTLpi0stEVQKTy00bfhFI05zxc7T3AMGVISIPw/viewform>

Nominations are open for this year's Leopold Conservation Award through 8/1. We've had a trend of recipients with strong ties to the conservation districts so far- help us get a great pool of nominees by sharing this in your newsletters and on social media! Thanks to the districts who have shared this on social media already. For those who would like to, you can link to this page in a post: <https://sandcountyfoundation.org/news/2024/maryland-leopold-conservation-award-seeks-nominees>

John Murphy, Ag Commission reported the Committee is looking at ways to organize sub-committees within the Commission for greater engagement and outcomes.

Amy Posey, Southern MD reported

Calvert:

- Annual dinner 3/21, same night
- Envirothon Competition 4/23 @ King's Landing Park
- Southern MD Regional Dinner 10/24/24, hosted by Calvert

Charles:

- Charles County's Envirothon competition will be held on April 17th
- Charles SCD Annual Cooperator Dinner will be held May 22nd.

Terry Nuwer, Lower Shore reported endowment auction items are needed for the summer MASCD meeting.

The 2024 application response for Conservation Buffer Initiative was strong.

Worcester SCD's student scholarship for \$500 is open through May 1

Steve Freeman, no report

Ed Wurmb, no report

Van Funk, Central MD reported

Baltimore County SCD

- The District sponsored the Extension's Vegetable Grower's Day.
- Met with Baltimore County on several occasions to discuss the District's budget.
- Continue to coordinate with Baltimore County to create a streamlined building permit/process for agricultural buildings.
- Invited the new Director of the Baltimore Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability to the March Board Meeting.
- Presented the District's Cooperator of the Year Award to Hidden Waters at the County Executive's Agricultural Listening Session on March 9
- Attended the Baltimore County Noxious Weed Board meeting.

Howard SCD

- The County Executive held a National Agriculture Day ceremony at the newest farm to enter into the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program. Among other funding announcements for the agricultural community was \$450k for the Howard Soil Conservation District to continue providing additional cost-share assistance on top of other Federal, State, and local conservation

programs. This additional funding has created a tremendous demand for conservation practices in the county.

- Several representatives from the Howard SCD have been asked to serve on the committee to develop strategies for the newly formed County Office of Agriculture. This will include the initiation of programs to assist farmers as well as a variety of educational and outreach initiatives to help the general public gain a better understanding of agriculture and conservation.
- Howard SCD held their Mid-Winter Agricultural meeting to provide educational information to local farmers. Attendance at the event was about 55 participants, most of which were farmers.

#### Cecil SCD

- The District is continuing the planning and coordination for a Cecil County Agriculture Education Days (CCAED) 7th Grade Event. Roughly 1200 Cecil County 7th grade students are expected to attend this three-day event. While there they will learn about Agriculture, Food Systems, Conservation, and Technology and relate it to their science curriculum. The event will take place April 30 to May 2 at the Cecil County Fairgrounds within the Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area.

#### Harford SCD

- On February 15 and March 14, Harford SCD participated with the Farmer Community Partnership Committee to prepare for their 6th symposium dubbed **“Nourishing our Resources Together”**. This year’s symposium will have an Envirothon theme with emphasis on soils, forestry, wildlife, and aquatics. The 6th symposium will be held on May 11, 2024 at the Deer Creek Overlook 4-H Camp.
- Harford SCD is leading the coordination of the upcoming Harford County Envirothon’s “Spring Workshop” at Harford Glen on April 5, 2024. Several high schools are expected to participate in this training exercise.
- Coming next month, please look for the Districts April newsletter edition.

#### Montgomery SCD

- Both Howard and Montgomery District are coordinating a rented lands survey initiative designed for landowners and farm tenants to better understand locally, the challenges associated with BMP implementation on rented lands. This effort builds upon the statewide rented lands initiative that the university of Maryland undertook several years ago. This effort is a part of both Districts involvement with the Patuxent Technical advisory committee’s working group. One end goal will be to host a technical workshop later this year targeting landowners and farmland renters about the importance of bmp implementation on renting lands.
- The district is spearheading an effort among the county’s agricultural leadership to hold an ag roundtable discussion with members of the county’s planning board to discuss the changing land uses in the county and its impact on agriculture. This roundtable will be on March 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Alisha Mulkey  
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: March 21, 2024

Members:

Van Funk  
John Murphy  
Steve Freeman  
Terry Nuwer  
Darren Jarboe  
Jim George  
Ed Wurmb  
Amy Posey  
Rob Feldt  
Suzy Daubert

Absent:

John Sullivan  
John Swaine  
Hans W. Schmidt

Others:

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Laura Pleasanton, FSA                    | Tom Filbert, OAG                   |
| Raymond Bahr, MDE                        | Rob Schnabel, CBF                  |
| Dan Rider, DNR                           | Tracey Rach, Cecil SCD             |
| Adam Heavner, Allegany SCD               | Mari Markkula, Cecil SCD           |
| David Scheler, Anne Arundel SCD          | Bruce Young, St. Mary's SCD        |
| Jim Ensor, Baltimore County SCD          | Haley Carter, St. Mary's SCD       |
| Chris Brown, Cecil SCD                   | Rachel Yeatman, NRCS               |
| Dee Dee Saunders, Charles SCD            | Dee Price, Washington County SCD   |
| Luis Dieguez, Charles SCD                | Mark Kendle, Washington County SCD |
| Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD            | Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD       |
| Diane Flickinger, Frederick County SCD   | David Plummer, Howard SCD          |
| Heather Hutchinson, Frederick County SCD | Jason Keppler, MDA                 |
| James "Smokey" Stanton, Garrett SCD      | Byron Petrauskas, MDA              |
| Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD            | Adam Lyon, MDA                     |
| John Zawitoski, Montgomery SCD           | Harrison Palmer, MDA               |
| Kathleen Sigwart, Montgomery SCD         | Becky Remsberg, MDA                |
| Steve Darcey, PGSCD                      | Ashley Brown, Calvert SCD          |
| Gail Myers, PGSCD                        | Eddie Franchesci                   |
| Jen Nelson, MASCD                        | Alisha Mulkey, MDA                 |