

State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)

Minutes

October 16, 2024 (Virtual)

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

The minutes of September 2024 were approved. (Posey/Feldt)

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

- Calvert SCD (UME) – Leonard Ogden (Nuwer/Freeman)
- Cecil SCD (UME) – William Ewing (Freeman/Swaine)
- Dorchester SCD (FB) – Wendell Meekins, Jr. (Nuwer/Swaine)
- Harford SCD (FB) – David R. Doran (Newer/Freeman)
- Wicomico SCD (UME) – Lee W. Richardson (Newer/Swaine)

SSCC Administration

Diane Flickinger was appointed as the Area 1 (Western MD) representative member of the SSCC by Secretary Atticks for a four-year term, beginning October 2024.

The November 2024 monthly meeting of the SSCC will be an in-person, closed session of the members to discuss administrative matters pertaining to the operations of the SSCC.

REPORTS

MD. Department of Agriculture – Hans Schmidt:

- MDA is represented at the 5-Star event in Cecil County this week.
- MDA will be present at the International Horse Show in Prince George's County next week.
- MDA will provide broader updates at the MASCD quarterly meeting next week.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

- DNR will be at 5-Star event in Cecil County
- Fall is bringing a lot of visitors to parks and forests [even more than previous- a “new normal”. There is a lot of extra maintenance associated with that, but not taking away from on-going projects.
- Attended Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) listening session. DNR is supportive of the effort and would like to be included in future discussions.

MD. Department of Environment – Jim George:

Resource Management Program (RMP) has two more listening sessions to receive input on the next AFO general discharge permit. Dates and venues will be:

- Oct. 21 – Frederick County Government, Winchester Hall 12 E. Church St, Frederick, MD 2170
- Oct. 24 –Virtual: Link info will be sent to SSCC listserv following meeting

Stu Comstock passed away last weekend. Condolences offered. Information on services will be sent to SSCC listserv after meeting.

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

The University of Maryland (UMD) is transitioning to a new administrative system called Workday. The transition will take place November 15.

The University of Maryland Extension is embarking on a strategic planning process to develop a stakeholder-driven plan, granting the university's faculty, staff, students, leadership, and community partners an opportunity to contribute to the institution's future success. To produce a specialized plan that is consistent with the broader objectives of the University of Maryland, we will prioritize strategies that will uplift our community and complement UMD initiatives. So far, we have engaged the Emergent Method to help us facilitate the process. We have started assembling data for desk research + data analysis, leveraging self-study and accreditation materials. We also developed an initial project plan and stakeholder engagement plan (including interviews, listening sessions, and town hall meetings). Our goal is to collect as many diverse perspectives and viewpoints as possible. We established a strategic planning steering committee and had a kick-off meeting on September 18. As we progress through the planning process, we will routinely update the website with status updates and information on engagement opportunities. More details on the website will follow very soon.

Last weekend Stanton Gill passed away suddenly. He was a long-time IPM specialist with the Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Extension Program in Maryland. Stanton's leadership of the ornamental horticulture team led to a high performing, collegial team that served Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic Region, and national horticulture industries. The team has been driving innovation through applied research and demonstration programs. Stanton always looked for ways to involve new Extension faculty members in research and educational programming, making them feel welcome and part of The AgFS Extension team. He will be missed by the AgFS Team, University of Maryland Extension, and the ornamental horticulture industry.

The AgFS Program has nine open positions. The Caroline County AgFS educator position was reopened for recruitment of candidates and initial screening is underway. Initial interviews are being arranged for the new faculty specialist for local foods and entrepreneurship position.

The ANMP program director position and faculty specialist positions will be reopened after UMD transitions to Workday. The nutrient management advisor interviews have taken place for the positions in Anne Arundel, Carroll, and Charles Counties and references have been requested. The search for a Washington County nutrient management advisor will be extended. The ANMP administrative assistant position closed October 14 and interviews will be set up soon.

Craig Yohn, nutrient management advisor, Dorchester County and past interim ANMP program director, announced his retirement from the ANMP effective October 31, 2024. Craig provided excellent service to his farmer clientele and his excellent nutrient management knowledge and expertise will be missed.

Sandy Corridon, interim program leader for 4-H Youth Development and Dr. Jeff Howard has taken over the role of interim program leader for 4-H Youth Development. Patsy Ezell, interim program leader for Family and Consumer Sciences Extension, has retired again and Dr. Lisa McCoy has stepped into the interim FCS program leader role.

Grant

Kumar, H. and D. Jarboe. 2024. Maryland NRCS Irrigation Services Agreement. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. \$1,437,526.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – – NO REPORT

Farm Services Agency – NO REPORT

MASCD – John Swaine:

Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming Program (Maryland BFF) Updates

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has determined that MASCD is required to have a Quality Assurance Project Plan, or QAPP, prior to conducting field assessments funded under our grant. NFWF works with a 3rd party contractor to provide guidance for completing the QAPP, but this requirement will delay the start of the project while we develop the plan and submit it to EPA for approval.
- MASCD conducted a field evaluation of a farm together with MDA and NRCS on 9/20. The purpose of the group evaluation was to 1) see how the Maryland BFF evaluation compares to a CSP evaluation with NRCS and 2) to ensure that all members of the partnership have a clear and common understanding of the evaluation criteria and expectations.
- Letters have been sent to farmers formerly certified under the Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) to let them know about the rebranding to Maryland BFF and to offer the opportunity to be recertified through the new program.
- Keith Campbell Foundation- MASCD has submitted a proposal to support the development of a media plan to promote the program. KR Creative Strategies (the same firm that we worked with on the Maryland BFF rebranding) has developed a proposal for our consideration if MASCD receives the funding.

Other Grants & Funding

- **NRCS Agreement Update-** MASCD has signed an agreement with NRCS to develop a new agreement for FY25 to fund administrative support in Caroline, Talbot and Kent counties, and a program support specialist in Queen Anne's County. The new agreement provides \$1,381,078.96 to fund the positions for the next five years.
- **Keith Campbell Foundation Proposals-** MASCD has also submitted a proposal to the Keith Campbell Foundation to continue our Leadership Development Initiative to

support the development of governance documents for districts and provide the opportunity for additional training for managers.

Other

- **Association of Conservation Executive Directors Conference in Manhattan, Kansas from September 30 – October 3.** This annual meeting of state association executive directors is a really good opportunity to share innovative projects and programs, and to compare notes on policy, budgets and challenges. For example, challenges in working with FPAC on leasing issues and agreement issues are universal across the country, although the staff size varies a lot between states and affects the capacity of each state to manage those challenges.

The group also learned about water rights easement programs in Kansas, and toured a training farm for veterans, the Kansas Wheat Innovation Center and the Koza Prairie Biological Station, where scientists are studying ecological outcomes associated with burn schedules and bison grazing patterns.

- **Rotary Clubs and NACD-** NACD has been having discussions with leadership at Rotary to explore partnership options. Rotary Clubs have added “Environment” as a new area of focus for their organization and are looking at the conservation districts as potential partners in offering volunteers and fundraising support. If you’re looking for support for a current project or program, consider reaching out to a local club and introduce yourself!
- **ShoreRivers and MDA** are conducting a survey on soil health practices and information needs in our region. If you have a moment, please fill out the brief survey and share on social media: <https://tinyurl.com/Oct24SoilHealthSurvey>

Upcoming Events & Deadlines

| DATE | EVENT |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>October 22, 2024</i> | MASCD Board of Directors Meeting, Baltimore County Agricultural Center |
| <i>February 3-4</i> | MASCD Winter Meeting at the Westin in Annapolis |
| <i>February 8-12, 2025</i> | NACD 2025 Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah |

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

Washington County:

- Cover crop program fall certification is underway
- Participated in Pollinator Palooza in September. Provided brochures, kids activities, soil test kits and more

Frederick County:

- Staff busy with field checks for cover crop reporting
- Annual banquet is Nov 21 at Jefferson Ruritan Center catered by Big Boys

Garrett, Carroll, Allegany: NO REPORT

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:

Calvert:

- Preparing for Envirothon training in early November
- DNR 5 watershed grant: gathering partners and defining roles
- Working to augment oyster community contacts and waiting the award of their first official reef design/construction contract
- Preparing for October 24 dinner
- Collecting cover crop reporting

Charles:

- Envirothon training at SCD. Very successful with high participation from high schools
- Retired NRCS DC John Kimmons passed away. He is fondly remembered for all of his contributions.

Anne Arundel, Prince George's, St. Mary's: NO REPORT

District Wide:

- Southern Area Dinner hosted by Calvert SCD will be held on Thursday, October 24, 2024, at the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons

Area 3 (Upper Shore) – NO REPORT

Area 4 (Central) - Van Funk:

Baltimore County SCD

- Recent county Ag Tour with Secretary Atticks and staff
- MS4 briefing held recently with Baltimore County

Cecil SCD

- Busy with 5-Star. Come visit. Highly recommended

Harford SCD

- Envirothon workshop on Oct 11. Focused on soils, aquatics, forestry and wildlife. 10 High schools participated.
- Cooperator's Dinner is Oct 24th at Level Volunteer Fire Company, 5:30 – 8:00 PM.

Howard SCD

- Fall Farm and Conservation Tour is today.
- Board met with local and state weed control agencies recently on noxious weeds in the public right-of-way.

Montgomery SCD- NO REPORT

Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Terry Nuwer:

All counties are busy covering flat rates, cover crops, and status reviews. Working with farmers on conservation plans and answering questions on FY 25 cover crop program.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m. (Posey/Jarboe)

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: October 17, 2024 (Virtual)

Members:

Van Funk
Diane Flickinger
Amy Posey
Steve Freeman
Terry Nuwer
Hans W. Schmidt
Rob Feldt
Jim George
Darren Jarboe
John Swaine

Absent:

John Murphy
Suzy Daubert
John Sullivan

SCD Representation:

Allegany: None
Anne Arundel: None
Baltimore County: Jim Ensor
Calvert: Jason Leavitt
Caroline: None
Carroll: None
Cecil: Chris Brown, Tracey Rach,
Charles: Luis Dieguez, Tim Wells, Dee Dee Saunders
Dorchester: None
Frederick County: Heather Hutchinson
Garrett: Jim (Smokey) Stanton
Harford: Quintin Cornwell
Howard: None
Kent: None
Montgomery: None
Prince George's: Gail Myers
Queen Anne's: None
Somerset: None
St. Mary's: Haley Carter
Talbot: John Swaine
Washington County: Dee Price, Mark Kendle
Wicomico: None
Worcester: None

MDA Staff:

Alisha Mulkey
Loretta Collins
Jason Keppler
Byron Petrauskas

Others:

Jen Nelson, MASCD