

State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)

Minutes

November 21, 2024 (Hybrid)

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

The minutes of October 2024 were approved. (Freeman/Swaine)

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

Baltimore County SCD (FB) – Mark T. Duvall (Freeman/Swaine)

Carroll SCD (FB) – Gregory M. Dell (Freeman/Swaine)

Garrett SCD (FB) – Dorsey R. Guard (Freeman/Feldt)

SSCC Administration

Maryland Agricultural Commission:

- Gordon Kretser (turf representative & Committee Chair of the Committee on Watershed Strategies) has been selected by the Commission to represent its interests on the SSCC.
- The SSCC thanks John Murphy for his contribution as the outgoing representative.

REPORTS

MD. Department of Agriculture – Hans Schmidt:

MDA is actively interviewing for vacant positions in the districts.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

- In the first 3.5 weeks of October, the Forest Service responded to 18 wildfires that burned 67 acres, nearly triple the 10-year average of 7 wildfires burning 21 acres for the month. The state spent 3 weeks of November under a burn ban as a result of severe drought conditions.
- Dr. Natalie Snider is joining DNR on 11/27 as the new director of the Coastal and Chesapeake Services (CCS). She has a 20-year background in integrating climate change impacts as a central consideration in strategic planning.

MD. Department of Environment – Jim George: NO REPORT

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

The University of Maryland (UMD) transitioned to a new administrative system called Workday. The transition took place November 15.

The University of Maryland Extension strategic planning process has tentatively scheduled the following stakeholder listening sessions listed below. Please attend to share your perspective with the consultants as they help UME develop its plan for the next five to ten years.

- Allegany County Fairgrounds, 11400 Moss Avenue, Cumberland, MD, 2:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m., December 10

- Washington County Extension, 7303 Sharpsburg Pike, Boonsboro, MD, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., December 11
- Wicomico County Extension Office, 28647 Old Quantico Road, Salisbury, MD, Morning, January 15
- Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Drive, Queenstown, MD, Morning, January 16
- Baltimore County Extension Office, 1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, MD, Morning, January 21
- Montgomery County Extension Office, 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, MD, Morning, January 22
- Maryland 4-H Center, 8020 Greenmead Drive, College Park, MD, Afternoon, January 23
- Southern Maryland, date, time, and site TBD

The update for AgFS Program positions is below:

AgFS Extension

- AgFS county educator, Caroline County: Finalists selected and interviews will take place December 4
- AgFS IPM specialist, ornamental horticulture: Ornamental horticulture team met and an industry listening session to discuss program needs is set for early December
- AgFS local foods and entrepreneurship specialist: finalist interview occurred November 15
- AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: The position is being evaluated

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted after the Workday transition is completed
- Faculty specialist – training: verbal acceptance of the position
- Nutrient management advisor, Allegany County: Will be posted after Workday transition is completed
- Nutrient management advisor, Anne Arundel County: verbal acceptance of the position
- Nutrient management advisor, Carroll County: verbal acceptance of the position
- Nutrient management advisor, Charles County: Will be reposted after Workday transition is completed
- Nutrient management advisor, Washington County: verbal acceptance of the position
- Nutrient management advisor, location TBD: Will be posted after Workday transition is completed
- Administrative assistant: Initial screening of candidates has been completed and interviews will take place November 22

Natural Resources Conservation Service – NO REPORT

Farm Services Agency – Laura Pleasanton:

CRP:

- FSA authority to administer CRP ended on September 30, 2024. Until legislation is passed that reauthorizes FSA to administer CRP, FSA is in a unique place with the program:

- No new offers can be created or processed in the software. No manual offers of any kind can be accepted. New offers are on hold and it is not known how long it will be until authority is restored.
- FSA can revise existing contracts but only if the revision does NOT result in the contract acreage increasing even a hundredth of an acre and all approvals are routed through the state office.
- To date, about 40,000 acres and about 3,500 acres are expiring on September 30, 2025 and eligible for reenrollment.
- Without current authority for CRP right now, NRCS has agreed to keep working on status reviews for next year's reenrollments (and potentially those that expire in FY26, too) and handling CPO modifications for existing contracts. They will be able to work on new enrollments to an extent. The caveat is that it is unknown what the program or person eligibility will be when the program opens again. FSA won't be able to create offers in TERRA or give estimates of acres or dollars so it's truly only possible to have very early conversations with producers and they must understand that there will be a wait.

Continued Drought: FSA is making livestock forage payments in many of the counties furthest west in the state. To date, about \$864,840 has been paid and that number continues to rise daily. Payments are based on the number and type of livestock along with the numbers of acres of pasture.

Farm Loans: The team has been training and preparing for a new rule that went into place recently that impacts both staff and borrowers.

Further Updates: Many programs were skipped for the sake of time. Go to farmers.gov and scroll down to the bottom of the page to subscribe to FSA newsletters and updates at the state and county level.

MASCD – John Swaine:

- **MASCD held its quarterly board meeting on October 22** at the Baltimore County Agricultural Center. We discussed new developments with the Maryland BFF Program and our next Winter and Annual Meetings in 2025. MDA also led discussions about the new LEEF Program, Whole Watershed Act Request for Proposals, and issues associated with delayed or canceled MACS projects.
- **MASCD 2025 Winter Meeting-** Registration is open on MASCD's website for our Winter Meeting! On February 3, we'll return to the Westin in Annapolis for our business meeting, followed by a legislative breakfast at Providence Strategies' new office on Maryland Ave. on February 4 and visit with elected officials later that morning. If you have items for the business meeting agenda, please let Jen know ASAP.
- **MASCD will be exhibiting at the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention and Future Harvest Annual Conference** to promote the Maryland Bay Friendly Farming Program. Stop by and visit if you're attending either of those events. Districts and partners can also help us reach out to good candidates and FSCAP-certified farmers by mentioning the program on calls and visits or including information in your newsletter and on social media- we appreciate your help in spreading the word!

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

There were no reports from Washington County, Garrett, Allegheny and Carroll SCD's.

- Frederick County SCD Annual Cooperators Banquet is Thursday, November 21 at Jefferson Ruritan starting at 6:30 pm.
- Frederick County Soil Health Day for February 12, 2025. The featured speaker will be Luke Jones from Understanding Ag. More information to come as we get closer to the date.
- Frederick County staff are busy with planning, checking construction of BMP's and checking cover crops. Two staff participated in a Career Day at the local Montessori School. They talked to students about the positions of Planner and Technician. The staff talked about the education and experience that prepared them for the position and then listed their job duties.

Area 2 (Southern): NO REPORT

Area 3 (Upper Shore): NO REPORT

Area 4 (Central): NO REPORT

Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Terry Nuwer: As a group, the Lower Shore offices are working on flat rate revisions to submit by Nov. 30th.

- Lower Shore Poultry Composting Course has been scheduled with UME for January 22, 2025
- Dorchester and Somerset: Fall Cover Crop reporting is keeping staff busy.
- Worcester: Intaking Fall Certification of Cover Crop Program paperwork and working with GardenerSign on District Outreach items for public outreach

The open meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m. in order to discuss SSCC administrative matters amongst SSCC membership (Posey/Jarboe).

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins
Executive Secretary

SSCC Attendance: November 21, 2024

***in-person**

Members:

Van Funk*
Diane Flickinger*
Amy Posey*
Steve Freeman*
Hans W. Schmidt*
Rob Feldt*
Darren Jarboe*
John Swaine*
Gordon Kretser
Suzy Daubert*

Absent:

Terry Nuwer
Jim George
John Sullivan

SCD Representation (dismissed following open session)

Allegany: None
Anne Arundel: None
Baltimore County: Jim Ensor
Calvert: None
Caroline: None
Carroll: None
Cecil: None
Charles: None
Dorchester: Karen Houtman
Frederick County: None
Garrett: None
Harford: None
Howard: None
Kent: None
Montgomery: None
Prince George's: None
Queen Anne's: None
Somerset: None
St. Mary's: None
Talbot: John Swaine
Washington County: None
Wicomico: None
Worcester: Chelsea Tyson

MDA Staff:

Alisha Mulkey*
Loretta Collins*

Others:

Jen Nelson, MASCD*