

**State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)
January 15, 2025 (Virtual)
Minutes**

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM

The minutes of December 2025 meeting were approved. (Swaine/Flickinger)

SSCC ADMIN

Appointments

District	Affiliation	Appointed	Motion/Second	Term Expires
Allegany	At-Large	Amanda Paul	Feldt/Freeman	11/08/2030

- February 19 meeting VIRTUAL ONLY
- March 19 meeting HYBRID, Location TBD
- MASCD 2026 Advocacy Toolkit now available: <https://mascd.net/advocacytoolkit/>

2026 Workplan was approved (Webster/Posey)

PRESENTATIONS

Overview Climate Pollution Reduction Grants

Guest Speakers: Allison Tjaden (MDE) Elliott Campbell (DNR), Nick Miller (MDA)

Discussion of MD Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (provided by EPA and funded through the Inflation Reduction Act). Allison provided an overview of the program, Elliott discussed work to build resiliency to climate-fueled changes on the Eastern Shore related to sea level rise and saltwater intrusion, and Nick discussed agroforestry initiatives through the Healthy Soils Competitive Fund to assist farmers to improve soil health, water conservation and carbon sequestration.

Overview of DNR Agroforestry Projects

Guest Speaker: Francis Smith, DNR

Francis provided a quick overview of agroforestry practices and projects such as windbreaks, educational farming outreach, alley-cropping, and silvopasture that are active or close to implementation across MD.

MEMBER REPORTS

MD Department of Agriculture- Hans Schimdt:

Personnel:

- Retirements: Nutrient Management- Howard Callahan, Kenny Favorite, Tim Zang, Moama Hines. State is in hiring freeze. Looking to get exceptions. Pat Gitlen (fiscal and grants administrator). Lynn Beuhler moved into position. Should be smooth

transition. Bonita Sims was critical to communication between HQ and Districts. Will be missed.

- Appointments: Elizabeth Hoffman is now Program Manager for Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF). Previously she wore many hats. Tina Stevens is now Field Assessments Team Supervisor. Alisha Mulkey is covering Watershed Strategies until that can be filled.
- Departures: Jessica Hackett (communications). Harrison Palmer Lauren Moses will cover until new appointment. Tom Phillips (state chemist). Rob Hostetter will be acting and Micheal Caulkins as back-up.
- Rowland Agbede (GIS specialist for whole agency) passed away in early December and will be sorely missed.
- Transitions: Rachel Jones has put in papers to be delegate in Southern MD. Will continue with MDA through special projects but will no longer be in legislative position. Harrison Palmer will provide coverage.
- Harrison Palmer has been named chief-of-staff to Secretary Atticks.

Legislative Session:

- Budget announcement next Wednesday. Hope not to have as many cuts as last year.

Outreach:

- February outreach campaign for stream protection through local television stations.
- Taste of Ag is February 5th
- Hughes Center report on Climate Smart Ag releasing at an event today. MDA will be taking the lead on most of the recommendations. We will be working on a new strategic plan incorporating recommendations.

HPAI:

- We had an HPAI case in Queen Anne's County last month. Many compliments have come in on how it was handled through the District.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

1. The Maryland Tree Farm Committee has named the Warren Tree Farm in Snow Hill the 2026 Tree Farm of the Year. They will be recognized in the Senate with a proclamation on Maryland Arbor Day, April 1, 2026.
2. Maryland has surpassed 1.5 million trees planted under the 5 Million Trees program. 555,330 trees were planted in Fiscal Year 2025. See the 2025 Annual Report [here](#) for more details.
3. Melissa Nash--Garrett Project Forester--was named the AFF Tree Farm Regional Inspector of the Year. This award recognizes inspectors from 21 northeastern states and she is now one of 4 national finalists for the 2026 National Tree Farm Inspector of the Year.
4. DNR's team of Chesapeake Bay policy experts were able to secure approval of the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in December. The revised Agreement will guide Bay cleanup efforts until 2040, with a mid-point check in 2033. Updates include new goals affecting wildlife habitat, fisheries; clean water; healthy landscapes; and engaged communities. It also includes specific outcomes for oyster restoration, underwater vegetation restoration, protected lands, and environmental education,

among many other topics. The Agreement also requires states to meet revised nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment reductions by 2040.

MD. Department of Environment – Greg Sandi:

- Stormwater Program has extended public comment period to Jan 30 and an additional listening session is Jan 20.
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/StormwaterManagementProgram/Pages/index.aspx>
- CAFO program has closed comment period for new permit and is actively responding to comments. No date on when permit will be finalized as of now.

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

President Darryll Pines announced the launch of Forward: The University of Maryland Campaign for the Fearless—a \$2.5 billion fundraising effort to achieve unprecedented transformation of the university. College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) Dean Wendy Powers has established teams to develop projects that fit the advancement of Forward.

Department of Veterinary Medicine Professor Dan Nelson was named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) for his work developing biologics to treat multidrug-resistant infections and sepsis; animal health, through veterinary diagnostics and therapeutics; public health and biodefense for applications against high-concern pathogens; and food safety and agriculture. He is the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR)'s first faculty member elected to the NAI.

AGNR expects 80 new students to arrive later this month for the start of the semester.

The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology is holding a press conference this afternoon to release Maryland Climate-Smart Agriculture: Roadmap to Resilience Press Conference. The event will be held at Lawyers Mall, 25 Calvert St, Annapolis.

The annual University of Maryland Extension (UME) Statewide Extension Advisory Council meeting took place October 16 at CMREC-Clarksville. There was a statewide virtual webinar on December 2 to provide a UME update for county Extension advisory boards and councils.

UME's request to use carry-forward funding for FY 2026 was approved. This limited funding enabled UME to extend SNAP-Ed employee contracts beyond October 1, ensuring a proper closeout of the program and its employees.

University of Maryland Extension – Baltimore County hosted a Legislative Breakfast on December 12 in Cockeysville. It was attended by legislators, legislative staff, county commissioners, and other public officials. The faculty and staff answered questions and discussed opportunities with attendees.

Sarah Hirsh, Somerset County Agriculture and Food Systems Educator, was featured on Maryland Farm and Harvest (MFH) discussing her work on tailoring cover crops to the needs of specific fields. Farmers Steven Kraszewski in Queen Anne's County and Bryan Racine in Cecil County collaborate on the project and were featured in segment. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation fund the project. The segment can be found on the MFH website (<https://www.mpt.org/programs/farm/>) in Episode 1303 on December 2.

University of Maryland Extension's Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) competition led by Nicole Fiorellino, Kelly Hamby, and Shannon Dill completed its first year. The program enables participants to try practices that they might not have access to or try practices that are risky. TAPS encourages farmers to test new production methods without risking their profits.

Edible DC featured Chris Walsh and Mengjun Hu, Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture faculty members, who collaborated with Butler's Orchard in Germantown on Antietam Blush apple variety and small fruit disease management. The article can be accessed at <https://edibledc.com/how-bout-them-apples/>.

The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program has received 809 plan requests, 477 of which have complete information. The team has completed 404 plans through December 31, an 84% completion rate. Farmers served, number of plans completed, and total acres planned are tracking similar to previous years.

LEAD Maryland Class XIII will take their study trip to Portugal in February. LEAD Maryland named Class XIV. Fellows will start the program in February 2026.

Dr. Sung-Jin Lee has joined UME as assistant director and program leader for Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS). She earned her M.S. (2006) and Ph.D. (2010) in housing from the Department of Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management at Virginia Tech University where she also completed a Graduate Gerontology Certificate. In 2010, Dr. Lee began work in the Department of FCS at North Carolina A&T State University, where she advanced from assistant professor of Housing Research to full professor before joining UME.

UME is searching for an assistant director and program leader to direct the 4-H youth development program. More information about the position can be found at https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/job/Senior-or-Principal-Agent---Assistant-Director-of-4-H-Youth-Development_JR103169. The best consideration date is February 28.

The current UME AgFS openings are:

AgFS Extension

- AgFS county educator, Frederick County: An offer has been made.
- AgFS county educator, Talbot County: References are being checked.
- LEAD Maryland agent associate: The committee is preparing to review candidates.
- AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: Funding is being secured for the position.

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted in spring.
- The nutrient management advisor positions in Baltimore, Harford, and Montgomery Counties have offers out to candidates.

Award

Chuck Schuster received the Landscape Contractors Association MD-DC-VA (LCA) Industry Partnership Award. This award honors an LCA member company or individual industry partner whose collaboration and commitment have meaningfully advanced the landscape profession. This award recognizes exceptional service and support that elevate industry standards and contribute to long-term success in the region.

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles

Barczewski, A., Bennett, S., Hutson, T., Ridgeway, B. 2025. A Retrospective Look at the University of Maryland Extension AGsploration Agricultural Literacy Program. Journal of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, Volume 18, Issue 2. December. ISSN 2158-9429. <https://www.nacaa.com/journal/9a04aabe-3262-468c-a231-10d439a6e454>

Franchini, A., Dill, S., Fiorellino, N., Grev, A. 2025. Creating Leadership & Professional Development Through Extension Internships: Preparing the Next Generation of Agriculture Workforce. Journal of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, Volume 18, Issue 2. December. ISSN 2158-9459. www.nacaa.com/file.ashx?id=186826ea-2ee7-45fd-823d-55f7eb708c6d

Glenn, A., Lang, A. 2025. The Power of 4-H Judging, Skillathon, and Bowl Events to Support Youth Thriving. Journal of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, Volume 18, Issue 2. December. ISSN 2158-9459. www.nacaa.com/journal/faf56bdf-9b93-4b28-b151-9e144758b20c

Extension Publications

Hayden Schug and Galen Dively. 2025. Common Soybean Pests in Maryland. (FS-2025-0759) <https://go.umd.edu/FS-2025-0759>

Serena Newton. 2025. Municipal Water Access for Adopt-A-Lot Program Participants & Establishing an Irrigation Account for Property Owners & Renters. (EB-2024-0722) <https://go.umd.edu/EB-2024-0722>

Serena Newton and Paul Goeringer. 2025. Understanding Agricultural Liability: General Liability Insurance. (FS-2025-0764) <https://go.umd.edu/FS-2025-0764>

Grant

Dr. Shunyuan Xiao received a prestigious \$2 million MIRA award from the National Institutes of Health to advance cutting-edge research in plant biology. His lab's work explores how plants defend themselves at the molecular level, with potential impacts on agriculture, food security, and climate resilience.

Natural Resources Conservation Service- Suzy Daubert:

Personnel:

- Montgomery/Howard: Sam Engler's last day as District Conservationist was Friday. Hans Kefauver will be acting for 120 days.
- Dorchester/Wicomico: Heather Beaven is returning to regular position. Timira Lockheart from Ohio starting Monday on 120 day detail.
- Suzy started Monday covering DE State Conservationist. Currently no end date.

Regenerative Ag:

Approved Feb 19, 2026

- Chief priorities in be covered at next state technical meeting. Will review FY 25 and then ask partners how they define regenerative ag and how NRCS can help. A lot is soil health related. Will reach out to MDA for collaboration.

Farm Services Agency- George Turner:

- Secretary Rollins announced MD State Committee members: Patricia Anne Langenfelder, Charles B. (Chip) Bowling, Jr., Steven Frederick Ernst, Robert Baubac Hajir, Stephen W. Isaacson
- Dairy Margin Coverage Program sign up started Jan 12 and will end Jan 26
- Farmer Bridge Assistance Program: final rule approved on Friday. Short-term relief related to inflation and trade disruptions until more permanent solutions through new Farm Bill and One Big Beautiful Bill

MASCD – John Swaine:

- **Registration for MASCD’s Winter Meeting is open through January 16.** This year’s meeting will be held February 9-10, 2026 at the Westin in Annapolis. An agenda is attached, and you can find more information on our website at <https://mascd.net/mascd-winter-meeting/>
- **MASCD needs your help this session! A “Session Action Checklist” for MASCD members** is attached with a list of activities that members can take to help advocate for conservation and to help us track the advocacy of our members. We’ve also added an Advocacy Toolkit to MASCD’s website that includes legislative priorities for the session so far- these may be revised as the session gets started and bills are introduced. Let Jen Nelson or Mike Mason know if you’d like to receive an invitation to join a weekly legislative update call.
- **MASCD has received funding to support a Producer-Led Watershed Group Pilot Project** in either the Central, Southern or Western regions of Maryland. More details are listed in the attachment, and applications from interested districts are due on February 13. At this stage, districts are being asked to identify a proposed watershed and the reasons supporting its selection.

Ag Commission- Gordon Kretser: NO REPORT

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

- Frederick County: Our 5th Annual Digging Deeper into Soil Health Day will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at New Midway Volunteer Fire Company. Registration starts at 8AM with our program running from 8:30AM-3:00PM. New this year we will have multiple speakers. Hear from Austin Unruh, CEO of Trees for Grazers, and see how silvopasture helps build healthier herds and landscapes. Learn from Dr. Amanda Grev why shade matters in Maryland’s hot and humid climate and explore smart alternatives beyond trees. And lastly join Andrew Sekellick & Alex Soroka with U.S. Geological Survey as they explain what water testing reveals about Best Management Practice effectiveness and stream health. Lunch is provided and NM & CCA credits are available! RSVP online at Evenbrite (search the event title) by calling the office (301-383-8782) or by emailing Kendra McAfee (kmcafee@fcsd.com).

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:

Anne Arundel:

- Cooperator Dinner Apr 9th

Charles:

- Applying for NACD technical assistance grant to use for growing demand of Urban Planning
- Applying for grant for warm season grass drill
- Final stages of adding manure spreader to rental program
- Looking for submissions for theme photos for their conference call

Prince George's

- Kick-off meeting for county ag and food securities as an advisor
- Applied for 3rd NACD tech asst grant that has funded a full-time urban ag planner in last two years
- Working on final statement for USDA Adv Marketing for Producers Grant. County Dept of Env is lead agency

St. Mary's

- Cooperator Dinner is Feb 20. Will have 50/50 drawing for Envirothon

Area-wide

- Supervisor Andrew Colevas volunteered for MASCD Legislative and Budgetary committee

Area 3 (Upper Shore) – Steve Freeman:

Kent:

- Large solar project across from John Deere on Route 291. More on the way.
- Washington College will help with Envirothon.

Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk:

Baltimore County SCD

- The December Board meeting was held at one of the supervisor's farm with a lunch and staff tour of the operation following.
- Ag staff toured a dairy to experience the life of a dairy farmer.
- On January 13th, district staff participated in the Baltimore County Farmer Fair.
- Teachers from Baltimore County Public Schools are expected to attend the January Board meeting to discuss reinstating the Envirothon to Baltimore County.
- The District continues to coordinate with Baltimore County Government to adopt a SWM Standard Plan for agriculture.

Howard SCD

- Howard SCD Supervisors and Staff hosted a Fall Farm and Conservation Tour for Elected Officials. Participants included 4 out of 5 Howard County Council Members with representation from most of the Howard County Delegation to the General Assembly. The group visited 4 different style farms and got a chance to meet with the respective farmers, learn about their operations, and see conservation practices they installed or will be implementing in the future. Approximately 30 people participated in the Farm Tour.
- Howard SCD kicked off budget season with the submittal of its FY27 Budget Request to Howard County. Indications are that the County may be implementing a 3% reduction across most County agencies.

Cecil SCD

Approved Feb 19, 2026

- On Friday January 16th, Cecil SCD will hold it's 78th annual Cooperator Banquet honoring Long Green Farms of Rising Sun, MD. The District anticipates hosting roughly 180 attendees. The event will take place at the Rising Sun Banquet Hall and will begin at 5:30 pm.
- The Cecil County Ag Education Days Planning Association has officially obtained its status as an independent 501c(3), allowing for donations to be tax deductible. The Ag Education Days event enhances the 7th grade science curriculum for students within public school system. The 3-day educational event hosts approximately 1,100 students annually.
- The Cecil County ag community welcomes Malik Grace as the new Cecil County Economic Development – Agribusiness Development Coordinator. Malik comes from U.S.D.A. and has held roles as an Agricultural Statistician with the National Agricultural Statistics Service and as an Agricultural Economist with the Foreign Agricultural Service. Cecil SCD looks forward to working with Malik as part of the Cecil County Ag Education Days Planning Association.

Harford SCD

- Harford SCD and MDA staff completed the 2025-2026 Cover Crop (CC) "fall certification" reporting and follow-up "spot checks" of the planted cover crop fields.
- On January 10, 2026, Harford SCD helped lead the Harford County Envirothon 5th Topic training event at Harford Glen which hosted 49 students and advisors from seven (7) local high schools.
- Harford SCD's January 2026 newsletter "The Harford Resource" and the Districts annual report were finalized and have been sent out electronically and by mail.
- Harford SCD's "Conservation Planner" was recently released. The planner is a new online educational tool for small farm and residential landowners. This tool will offer six (6) primary categories: small **farms, urban agriculture, lawn care, home garden, trees & forestry, and soil health** to choose from for useful tips, recommended BMPs, and more. A conservation report can be generated for any property in Harford County. Each report, based on the category chosen, will include an aerial map, parcel information, topography map, soils information, pertinent recommended BMP types, and more.

Montgomery SCD

- No report

Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Anne-Meredith Webster:

Worcester:

- Annual \$500 Scholarship Offering has been approved and will be posted on the SCD Website.
- Supervisors David Hudson (Chairman) and Valeria Nasir plan to attend the MASCD Winter meeting in February.
- WO, WI, SOM are Sponsoring an Outreach table for the January 21st Lower Shore Ag Day in Princess Anne. Staff will be in attendance; we will also be hosting a Worcester Tech-School student that day.

Wicomico:

- Chairman Bobby Guy and Associate Travis Harcum will attend the Winter Meeting.
- Wicomico will be part of the outreach at Lower Shore Agronomy Day in Princess Anne.
- Staff is working on site visits with DCA for co-cost sharing on some projects.

Somerset:

- MDA planners have been updating conservation farm plans and no-land nutrient management plans.
- Board Supervisors Robert Fitzgerald, Anne-Meredith Webster and Lee West are planning to attend the MASCD winter meeting.

Dorchester:

1. Posting District Scholarship for \$500.00.
2. Larry Scott and John Burtman will attend Winter Conference along with the District Manager.

SUMMARY OF CLOSED SESSION HELD ON January 15, 2025

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:

Time of closed session: 11:20 AM

Place (location) of closed session: Virtual Google meets platform

Purpose of the closed session: 1. Discuss applications submitted for Soil Conservation District Supervisor Positions 2. Discuss administrative matters dealing with the operations of SSCC

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:

Names of members voting aye: Motion: Swaine Second: Sandi

Members opposed: NONE

Members abstaining: NONE

3. Statutory authority to close session:

This meeting was closed under the following provisions of General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b):

4. Topic #1: § 3-305(b) (x)

"To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals"

Listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

Topic description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
#1: Calvert SCD Supervisor	Virtual: Flickinger, Posey, Freeman, Funk, Webster, Schmidt, Feldt, Sandi, Jarboe, Swaine, Collins	Discussion of application materials- no vote
#2: Caroline SCD Supervisor	Virtual: Flickinger, Posey, Freeman, Funk, Webster, Schmidt, Feldt, Sandi, Jarboe, Swaine, Collins	Discussion of application materials- no vote
#1: St. Mary's SCD Supervisor	Virtual: Flickinger, Posey, Freeman, Funk, Webster,	Discussion of application materials- no vote

	Schmidt, Feldt, Sandi, Jarboe, Swaine, Collins	
#4: Queen Anne's Supervisor	Virtual: Flickinger, Posey, Funk, Webster, Schmidt, Feldt, Sandi, Jarboe, Swaine, Collins	Discussion of application materials- no vote

The SSCC continued discussion of supervisor application expectations and form updates.

The meeting was adjourned from closed session at 11:50 AM (Webster/Jarboe).

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins, Executive Secretary

Attendance (Open Meeting): January 15, 2025

SSCC Member	Name	Present	Absent
Area 1- Western	Diane Flickinger	X	
Area 2- Southern	Amy Posey	X	
Area 3 - Upper Shore	Steve Freeman	X	
Area 4 - Central	Van Funk (Chair)	X	
Area 5 - Lower Shore	Anne-Meredith Webster	X	
MDA	Hans Schmidt (10:00 AM)	X	
DNR	Rob Feldt	X	
MDE	Greg Sandi	X	
UMD	Darren Jarboe		
MASCD President	John Swaine	X	
Ag Commission	Gordon Kretser		X
USDA-NRCS (non-voting)	Suzy Daubert	X	
FSA (non-voting)	George Turner	X	

Additional:
 Nick Miller, MDA
 Alison Tjaden, MDE
 Francis Smith, DNR
 Daniel Pratson, UME
 Elliott Campbell, DNR