

**State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)
May 21, 2026 (Hybrid)
Minutes**

Location: MDA Headquarters, Annapolis, MD

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 AM

The minutes of April 2026 meeting were approved. (Feldt/Swaine)

SSCC ADMIN

- June 18 Meeting at Somerset Soil Conservation District, Princess Anne: **Tour at 9:30AM, SSCC meeting start at 10:30 AM PLEASE RSVP**
- July 16 meeting at MDA Headquarters, Annapolis
- MOU Update: MDA and MDA Inspections and Enforcement on Ag Operations
- **Supervisor Appointments:**
 - Anne Arundel SCD, At-Large: Donald H. Entzian (Motion Feldt, Second Swaine)

PRESENTATIONS

Chesapeake Bay Program Updates

Alisha Mulkey, MDA, provided a summary of 2025 progress toward nutrient and sediment load reduction goals per the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement and a look towards what is next.

Q: Pasture and hay fertilizers additions are high in the current model compared to what actually happens.

A: Phase 6 assumes low additions for hay and pasture. Phase 7 will differentiate between hay and pasture- assuming more N additions on hay fields and really low for pasture.

Q: There is a concern that model updates raised the bar for agriculture goals beyond other sectors. How do we keep an eye on that?

A: As a sector agriculture needs to acknowledge that nitrogen additions in ag are significant, but also necessary. There are always conversations on what are the reasonable expectations in ag. In terms of wastewater sector, goals have been met certainly at larger plants, but there are limits in what is doable across all sectors. The jurisdictions continue to wrestle with that.

Legislative Session Summary

Harrison Palmer, MDA, provided a summary of the outcomes of this year's legislative session that are relevant to the SSCC.

MEMBER REPORTS

MD Department of Agriculture- Hans Schimdt:

- Appreciates the work of all in the Partnership in getting Bay goals done. Next legislative session will be presenting progress towards those goals. For context, in 2018 many local meetings happened to understand what is needed to get the conservation work done. MDA subsequently asked the legislature for 83 technical positions. Managed to get 53 field staff even in a tough fiscal environment. The importance of showing

progress cannot be overstated. District support in communicating progress is also critical. Numbers matter. Even if one is uncomfortable speaking to legislatures, showing up makes an impression.

- Resource Conservation all-staff meeting was on Tuesday at Sandy Point Park.
 - Heat Stress policy (temps greater than 80 degrees) discussed.
 - How to prevent escalation (or deescalate) in stressful work environment to maintain safety.
- Resources Conservation working on revised strategic plan. Need input. Hope to have complete by end of summer. Will include climate. Harry Hughes 13 recommendations in Roadmap to Resiliency, 10 of which MDA will take lead on.
- Executive Order requires Environmental Justice strategic plan. Feedback is requested via survey on MDA website.
https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/environmental_justice.aspx
- MDA has submitted emergency regulations for no-land CAFOs for 5-year Nutrient Management plans rather than 3-year. Also extends to pasture-only operations with no commercial fertilizer application. There is a comment period. It will be finalized end of June or early July. More clarification to come.
- Cover Crop Program sign-up begins June 22nd. Details not yet released. Got feedback from farmers going into this year's sign-up period.
- New Asst Secretary, Nicole Sherry. Experienced in turf industry.
- MD is hosting the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) annual meeting in Cambridge in June. There will be a panel on Bay progress with local stakeholders.
- In process of updating database system from Oracle to Salesforce. Conservation Tracker was retired. New system is known as ACRE. Ask for patience during transition.
- Secretary Atticks and Asst Secretary Schimdt are working to make it out to districts and operations around the state.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

- Fire season coming to an end: 2000 ac of wildfire burn, 3000 ac of prescribed burn
- Wrapping up planting season: about 200 seedlings planted. Aiming to get to 5 million trees planted by 2031. 10% of plantings in underserved areas.

MD. Department of Environment – Greg Sandi:

- CAFO permit came out in May.
- Comment period for Stormwater Management Design Manual update expired. Response is TBD.

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

The Creating Leadership and Professional Development Through Extension Internships Program selected nine summer interns for 2026. Interns represent the North Carolina State University; Penn State; Potomac State College of West Virginia; Salisbury University; University of Maryland, College Park; and University of Maryland Eastern Shore to participate in a 10-week full-time internship program starting May 26th. This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, AFRI Competitive Grant Workforce Development, to create a meaningful summer internship program for students to gain technical skills and train a future agricultural workforce.

LEAD Maryland Class XIII graduation will be held June 2nd in Frederick.

The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program has completed 4,429 plans covering 225,194 acres for 987 farmers through April in FY 2026. The ANMP In-Service took place May 18 at the Anne Arundel Extension Office.

Lisa Gonzalez accepted the agent associate position (program director) with LEAD Maryland. She received a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Warren Wilson College; a M.S. in Nutrition and Integrative Health from the Maryland University of Integrative Health; and expects to complete a doctorate in Education Leadership at Western Carolina University later this year. Lisa completed a Teaching Certificate from Antioch New England University. She starts May 31 and will be housed at the Wye Research and Education Center.

The search for a new assistant director and program leader for the 4-H Youth Development Program will be reopened to candidates who submitted after the best consideration date.

UME AgFS Openings

AgFS Extension

- 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.
- Two nutrient management advisor positions are currently open.

AGNR Awards

- Off-Campus Staff Excellence Award: Craig Yohn, UME
- Off-Campus Junior Faculty Award: Hemendra Kumar, UME
- Integrated Research and Extension Excellence Award: Rebecca Epanchin-Niell, AREC
- The Paul R. Poffenberger Excellence in Teaching and Advising Award: Nidhi Rawat, PSLA
- Dean's Grantsmanship Award: Nidhi Rawat: PSLA

Natural Resources Conservation Service- Suzy Daubert:

- New Chief of NRCS Colton Buckley as of 5/18 Monday
- Western RC&D Exec Director Peg Shaw-McBee resigned
- Roundtable 5/27 in Parsonsburg noon to 2. Conservation Practices that will be discussed are:
 - 315 Brush Management
 - 315 Herbaceous weed treatment
 - 423 Dry Hydrant
 - 575 Trails and Walkways
 - 643 Structures for Wildlife
 - 666 Forest Stand Improvements

Farm Services Agency- George Turner:

CRP Continuous Signup 65:

The second batching period for the CRP Continuous Signup 65 concluded on May 1. The program received participation from Maryland producers, and all offers submitted by Maryland farmers were accepted. This resulted in 17 new contracts covering 30 acres of environmentally sensitive land.

General CRP Signup 66:

Under General Signup 66, all submitted offers underwent evaluation based on cost considerations and a summarized score across five environmental factors. Nationwide, 361,303 acres of offered land met eligibility standards. Of that, Secretary Rollins approved 325,244 acres for enrollment in program year 2026, with contracts beginning October 1, 2026. The national average annual rental rate for the accepted acreage is \$58.06 per acre. Maryland producers offered a total of 51 acres, all of which were accepted into the program.

Grasslands CRP:

The Grasslands CRP enrollment window remains active, with the current sign-up period scheduled to conclude on May 29.

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP):

USDA has expanded financial assistance to producers affected by natural disasters during calendar years 2023 and 2024. Secretary Rollins has authorized a second SDRP payment for all producers with approved program applications. This initiative builds on the substantial level of support already provided; to date, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has issued \$6.7 billion in SDRP payments to eligible applicants; \$36.5 million has been issued to Maryland farmers.

To streamline payment accuracy and ensure our producers have adequate time to correct or update their applications, USDA has extended the original deadline for program changes. Instead of the previous due date of April 30, producers now have until August 12, 2026, to complete all updates for SDRP Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Initial SDRP payments were distributed using a 35 percent payment factor. After further review of data and loss assessments, USDA increased the payment factor to 70 percent, resulting in an additional 35 percent distribution to previously approved applicants. All future SDRP payments will also be issued at this higher 70 percent rate, providing significantly enhanced support to producers recovering from disaster-related losses.

By extending the SDRP deadline and making available this additional payment, President Trump and Secretary Rollins continue to put farmers first during this difficult farm economy.

Disaster Designations and Impacts

FSA State Emergency Board (SEB) has requested A Secretarial Disaster Designation in response to a widespread frost and freeze event that occurred on April 21, affecting

numerous counties statewide. Prior to the freeze, unseasonably warm early-year temperatures accelerated crop growth, leaving multiple specialty crops vulnerable when freezing conditions returned abruptly. The most affected commodities include grapes, apples, peaches, nectarines, cherries, and barley. Other crops affected, plums, blackberries, black raspberries.

County damage assessments indicate severe impacts: 18 out of 23 counties recorded crop losses exceeding the 30 percent threshold required for secretarial disaster consideration. In many situations, surveyed farms reported complete (100 percent) loss of certain crops, underscoring the magnitude of this weather-related disaster.

Two existing programs administered by FSA, TAP – Tree Assistance Program and NAP – Non-Insured Assistance program are currently available to our producers without the requirement of a disaster designation. TAP is available for replanting and rehabilitation of eligible trees, bushes, and vines. NAP covers eligible weather-related crop losses greater 50% of established production history.

Drought-Related Designation – April 10, 2026:

Separately, on April 10, USDA issued a Secretarial Disaster Declaration for nine Maryland counties due to ongoing drought conditions in 2026. This designation provides access to federal disaster assistance, including FSA Emergency (EM) Loans, for eligible farm operators struggling with drought-related financial strain. The Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) also remains available to compensate producers for grazing losses associated with drought on privately owned or cash-leased land.

Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF)

The Trump Administration has reaffirmed its commitment to agricultural producers through targeted support for the specialty crop sector. The Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program is intended to supplement the existing Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program by addressing economic pressures that have disproportionately affected specialty crop producers.

These one-time bridge payments aim to alleviate ongoing challenges, including:

- Market disruptions
- Elevated input and production costs
- Market losses resulting from unfair foreign trade practices affecting exports

The acreage reporting deadline for 2025 specialty crops was April 24. Now that acreage reporting has been completed, the department will review the data and FSA will release ASCF payment rates and related enrollment details in a short time.

MASCD – John Swaine:

Highlights

- **Registration is open for MASCD's 2026 Annual Meeting, August 3-5 at the Hyatt in Cambridge.** We're working on the agenda, so if you're aware of a program or project that's of interest to the districts and partners, let Jen know. Registration and more information about the meeting is available on MASCD's website.
- **Leopold Conservation Award nominations are open** through July 15 for the 2026 award. Districts should consider nominating their cooperator of the year! Farms of all sizes and operation types are eligible.

Grants and Funding

- **Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming Program-** Please help us spread the word to good candidates! Contact Chelsea at Chelsea.Gebbia@resourcesmartllc.com for more information, or visit bayfriendlyfarms.com/ for more details and an online application.
- **NFWF Tax Ditch Grant-** Funds are available through the grant to fund wetland restoration projects, floodplain reconnection, two stage ditches, riparian buffers and other water quality practices. About \$500,000 in implementation funds remain, and about \$50,000 in incentive funds for participating public drainage associations.
- **Producer-Led Watershed Pilot Project-** MASCD is pursuing alternative projects to the original "producer-led watershed pilot project" concept. These two projects are based on conversations with board supervisors, but will be coordinated by MASCD rather than the districts. More details will be available once the projects are confirmed to move forward.

Other Updates

- **NACD Member Services & Business Models Design "Sprint" Team-** As part of their strategic planning process, NACD has coordinated a few teams of members and stakeholders to gather input on how to ensure the effectiveness and impact of the organization. Jen is participating on the Member Services and Business Models Design team (on behalf of the state association executive directors), to consider the needs of districts with a diversity of organizational capacities across the country, along with a suite of options for NACD to provide effective services that meet those districts where they're at. The teams will meet once per week for a few months and submit their recommendations to NACD's Executive Board for their consideration.
- **The Partnership Press' Spring 2026 Issue is out-** Find the new issue at MASCD's website: <https://mascd.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/2026-May.pdf>

Upcoming Events

- August 3-5, 2026 MASCD Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay, Cambridge- <https://mascd.net/2026-mascd-annual-meeting/>
- August 24-27, 2026 NACD NE Region Meeting, Wilmington, DE- <https://dacdnet.org/2026nacdne/>

Aq Commission- Gordon Kretser: NO REPORT

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

Washington County

- Cover Crop Program – Spring Reporting underway.
- WCSCD had their "Garden Day" on Friday, April 17th - Maintenance/Spring cut-back for the two Pollinator Gardens at the Office Complex.
- On May 2, WCSCD participated in the Keedysville Spring Fest; promoting soil testing,

forest conservation, pollinators, etc.

- Newer Staff attended the NRCS Boot Camp on May 5-7, 2026.

Frederick County

- The Frederick County Envirothon was held on April 28th at Cunningham Falls State Park, with 20 teams participating. The winning team was from Catocin High School
- The FCSCD received their Soil Health display. The educational display was purchased with a grant from the Maryland Agriculture Council.
- Five students will be awarded monies from the 2026 George A. Nicholson, Sr. Memorial Scholarship fund.

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:

Anne Arundel: No Report

Calvert: No Report

Charles:

- Held our Annual Cooperators Dinner last night, thanks to everyone who attended it was a great event.
- Completed our Coloring/Poster contest
- Will be attending the 'Wetlands Day' at Arthur Middleton Elementary School on May 26
- Have selected a candidate for our Summer Internship program, supported by the County Government

Prince George's:

- Held our 50th Annual Cooperator of the Year Dinner honoring ECO-City Farms. They are the 1st Urban Ag Farm Operation to be recognized as Cooperator of the Year in Prince George's County and in Maryland.
- Held the annual Envirothon competition. There were 17 schools and 84 students who participated. Laurel HS won 1st place.
- Working with various County agencies to address some of the newly passed State legislation. Specifically, Agrivoltaics, SWM related to agritourism, and changes to the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area land use requirements.
- Working with County officials to discuss the location for a meat slaughtering and processing facility in Prince George's County.

St. Mary's: No report

Area 3 (Upper Shore) – Steve Freeman: NO REPORT

Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk:

Baltimore County SCD: No report

Cecil SCD

- On 4/6 CSCD Chairman, Bruce Yerkes, attended the Cecil County School of Technology's Senior Awards program. On behalf of CSCD, Bruce presented a district scholarship award to a deserving Cecil County School of Technology student planning to attend college in the field of Natural Resources and/or Agriculture.
- On 4/21 CSCD held its Spring Envirothon Competition at the Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area. Approximately 66 students from 6 different schools competed. Rising Sun High School won the county competition for the second year in a row and the team plans to go on to the state competition at Mount St. Mary's June 10th and 11th.
- From 4/28 to 4/30, CSCD participated in the Cecil County Ag Education Days Event at the Cecil County Fairgrounds. The district works year-round providing planning support, volunteers, coordination, and presenters for the event. Through the "Land and Water" section of the event, the District educated roughly 1,100 seventh grade students through three out of the twelve education stations. This was the third year for the event and it is getting better each year.

Harford SCD

- On April 25th, Harford SCD participated in the Harford County Ag-Stravaganza event at the Harford County Ag Center. Harford SCD managed two (2) display tables and promoted their new online conservation planner tool.
- On May 8th, Harford SCD coordinated and helped sponsor the Harford County Envirothon Competition which was held at the Eden Mill Nature Center. Multiple teams representing seven (7) local high schools participated. Robert Cassilly, Harford County Executive, attended the event which was won by the North Harford High School.
- On May 11th, Kimberly Doran Lyons, Agricultural Business Development Associate, with the Harford County Department of Economic Development, provided the results of the Farmers & Veterans Internship survey. Based on the limited response, the District may attempt later in the year to obtain more responses to assess the farming community interest with a potential mentoring program for military veterans.

Howard SCD: No report

Montgomery SCD: No report

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

Worcester:

- SCD Website is ADA Compliant with a 100% score as of April 27th; see the Worcester Accessibility page for details.
- The SCD Board has selected (4) graduating seniors for their annual Scholarship Award.

- Also supporting: Worcester FFA 13-student team for the State FFA (Garrett County) Competition in June *and* the 2026 UME Poultry Expo (Somerset County) in September.
- Bylaws for the District have been drafted. The District Manager is working on presenting a final copy to the Board and their legal counsel in June.

Wicomico:

Wicomico is currently taking Spring Certifications for cover crop, completing site visits for CNMP updates, planning for some children's activities at the upcoming county fair, and will be hosting a Producer Roundtable Meeting with Suzy Daubert on May 27th to discuss certain NRCS practices related to forestry, wildlife and oysters.

Somerset:

- Completing cover crop spring certifications.
- Updating no-land poultry nutrient management plans.
- Updating conservation plans.
- Preparing for the SSCC tour, meeting and lunch on June 18, 2026.

Dorchester:

- District Manager attended job fair at Maces Lane Elementary Grades 3,4, and 5.
- Submitted ad for Caroline/Dorchester County Fair and will have a booth August 5-8th at the event.
- Finishing up Spring Certification for Cover crop.
- Attending NRCS roundtable w/ Wicomico May 27th.

SUMMARY OF CLOSED SESSION HELD ON MAY 21, 2025

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

Time of closed session: 11:23 AM

Place (location) of closed session: MDA Headquarters, Annapolis, MD

Purpose of the closed session: 1. Discuss applications submitted for Soil Conservation District Supervisor Positions

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

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

Members opposed: NONE

Members abstaining: NONE

Statutory authority to close session:

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

Topic #1: § 3-305(b)(1) "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:

#1: Dorchester SCD Supervisor Applications

In-person: Funk, Collins, Jarboe, Swaine, Posey, Sandi, Feldt, Schmidt

Virtual: Flickinger, Webster, Kretser

Action Taken: Discussion of application materials- no vote

#2 Kent SCD Supervisor Applications

In-person: Funk, Collins, Jarboe, Swaine, Posey, Sandi, Feldt, Schmidt

Virtual: Flickinger, Webster, Kretser

Action Taken: Discussion of application materials- no vote

#3: Somerset SCD Supervisor Applications

In-person: Funk, Collins, Jarboe, Swaine, Posey, Sandi, Feldt, Schmidt

Virtual: Flickinger, Webster, Kretser

Action Taken: Discussion of application materials- no vote

#4: (Administrative) A brief update on revised supervisor application was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned from closed session at 11:54 AM (Jarboe/Sandi).

Respectfully Submitted,

Loretta Collins, Executive Secretary

MEMBER ATTENDANCE (OPEN MEETING): MAY 21, 2026

Present In-Person:

Amy Posey (Vice-Chair)
Van Funk (Chair)
Hans Schmidt
Rob Feldt
Greg Sandi
Darren Jarboe
John Swaine
Suzy Daubert
George Turner

Present Virtually:

Diane Flickinger
Anne-Meredith Webster
Gordon Kretser

Absent:

Steve Freeman

ADDITIONAL PARTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Present in Person:

Jen Nelson, MASCD
Eric Hines, NRCS

Present Virtually:

Harrison Palmer, MDA
Alisha Mulkey, MDA
Eric Hadaway, Baltimore County SCD
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD
Tim Wells, Charles SCD
Mark Carey, Somerset SCD
Mark Kendle, Washington County SCD
Gail Myers, Price Goerge's SCD
David Stonesifer, Frederick County SCD
Steve Darcey, Prince George's SCD
Diana Lagunes, Prince George's SCD
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD