

**State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)
June 18, 2026 (Hybrid)
Minutes**

Location: Somerset Soil Conservation District, Princess Anne, MD

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM

The minutes of May 2026 meeting were approved. (Kretser/Swaine)

SSCC ADMIN

- July 16 meeting at MDA Headquarters, Annapolis
- NO MEETING in August (MASCD Summer Meeting Aug 3-5)
- MOU Update Reminder: MDA and MDA Inspections and Enforcement on Ag Operations. Districts are asked to review MOU and get feedback back to the SSCC. Time is allotted at MASCD for discussion.
- **Supervisor Appointments:**
 - Dorchester SCD, UME: George Phillip Windsor (Swaine/Posey)
 - Kent SCD, At-Large: W. Frank Barnes, Jr. (Feldt/Sandi)
 - Somerset SCD, At-Large: Walter "Lee" West, Jr. (Webster/Swaine)

PRESENTATIONS

Saltwater Intrusion

Kate Tully, UMD, gave an overview of saltwater intrusion challenges and research on the shore, along with colleagues Jarrod Miller, UD and Emmie Woerner, UMD.

Select Question and Answer:

Question: What species are showing most potential for fields affected by saltwater intrusion? Answer: Spartina patens is high value for wildlife, bird food, and deer bedding and it is beautiful. Deer love switchgrass, but it's not good for every species of bird. Phragmites does well but is low value and invasive.

Question: How does the saltwater enter the fields? Answer: Each field is different so it's hard to diagnose. Tidal creek can be coming up through groundwater rise or arriving in over land flow. At the edge of field it's both and in the middle its capillary action through soil.

Question: What is the function of plant species in addressing saltwater intrusion? Answer: 1. Removal of sodium with harvest 2. Uptake by roots while providing wildlife habitat and farmer compensation for plantings.

Question: How accessible are alternative plant species? Answer: It is still limited but some local vendors carry switchgrass species. Plugs are labor-intensive, so seeds are better. Currently working with local seed companies and retailers to improve availability.

HPAI Update

Kimberly Abramo, MDA, provided a brief overview of the recent Avian Flu season. Emphasizes the importance of agency and district partners in responding to outbreaks and that MD is getting better at it with every season.

Select Question and Answer:

Question: What were the economic impacts of the 2025/2026 season? Answer: Don't have specifics for this update. Closing control areas is critical to limiting impacts. Delaware Chicken Association may have numbers on this.

Question: Is direct or lateral spread worse? Answer: It is more about what can be controlled. Direct infection from migrating birds is hard to control. Lateral spread to adjacent operations can be contained through consistent biosecurity measures. MD has done well with controlling lateral spread.

Comment: Backyard flock monitoring is also critical. Registration of such flocks facilitates communication about HPAI and monitoring of HPAI events.

CAFO Permit Update

Dave Mister went over the finer point of the new CAFO permit. Emphasized July 7 deadline for payment of fees for registered operations. <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/recyclingandoperationsprogram/pages/afoinfo.aspx>

Lower Shore MD Spotlight

Bob Fitzgerald, long-serving Somerset supervisor and chair welcomed the SSCC and spoke about the history and beauty of the region and how things have changed over time in conservation and landforms. Somerset has changed a great deal in recent decades due to sea-level rise, land subsidence, and the effects of salt water intrusion.

MEMBER REPORTS

MD Department of Agriculture- Hans Schimdt:

- Cover Crop Program sign-up starts June 22. Funding is about same as last year: \$22 million. Listened to concerns with farmer workgroup, will allow aerial seeding into soybeans at base rate.
- Cover Crop Plus program: webinar next week.
- The Environmental Justice Survey is still open on the website. Please provide feedback.
- Thanked the Districts for working to get agreements in for MACS for 100% cost-share by deadline (will decrease to 87.5 % moving forward)
- Nutrient Management Fundamentals class is June 24/25. Exam Aug 7. Pasture-only (no fertilizer) operations will go to a 5-year plan (press-release coming).
- SASDA meeting hosted by MD earlier this week. Secretary Atticks chairs the Southern Region. Included Secretaries far west as Texas. Thanks to Chris Brown for serving on a panel about conservation. Over-arching topics are marketing, trade, and animal health. New world screwworm is hurting Texas- worked on strategy moving forward.
- Received letters of concern from Districts wanting to participate in interview process for new staff. Discussing with Human Resources. Resource Conservation has grown in recent years- filling the vacancies efficiently is a challenge. There are state requirements for interview panels that need to be considered.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt: No Report

MD. Department of Environment – Greg Sandi: No Report

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

Due to reductions in the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)'s state-funded base budget, it is projected that as many as 150 positions could be affected through a combination of vacancy eliminations, retirements and layoffs. After accounting for vacant positions and retirements, 84 state-funded employees were laid off. Every effort was made to maintain the academic, research, service, and administrative functions that are essential to UMD's mission.

Dr. Amanda Grev, forage management specialist, and Dr. Sarah Hirsh, Extension educator in Somerset County, were promoted to senior agent with tenure. Emily Zobel, Extension educator in Dorchester County, was promoted to principal agent associate.

The Creating Leadership and Professional Development Through Extension Internships Program visited the UMD campus June 10-11, holding its luncheon on June 11th. The interns learned about different research and Extension programs as well as graduate school opportunities.

FOX45 Community Connections interviewed Ben Beale, Extension educator in St. Mary's County, and Neith Little, Extension educator in Baltimore City, about University of Maryland Extension programs. The interview starts at the 10:07 mark at <https://foxbaltimore.com/station/community-connections/community-connections-horse-agriculture-seafood-industries>.

The Maryland Agritourism Workshop held June 4th at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center-Clarksville hosted a robust discussion about issues important to the growth of the agritourism industry. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore, University of West Virginia, Cultivating Tourism, and UMD conducted the workshop.

LEAD Maryland Class XIII graduated in Frederick on June 2nd.

The UMD Small Grain Field Day was held May 26th 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: The funding is in the final stage of approval.

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted this summer.
- Recruitment for nutrient management advisors in Washington and Talbot Counties will be initiated this summer.

Publications

- Grev, A. M., Semler, J.W., & Potts, S. B. (2026). Effects of spring nitrogen and sulfur fertilization on triticale yield and forage quality. *Agronomy Journal*, 118, e70344. <https://doi.org/10.1002/agj2.70344>

- Nichols, K., Habibi, M., McDonald, I. (2026) Sustaining High Teacher Ratings While Updating a Large-Scale Urban Agricultural Literacy Program. Journal of the NACAA, 19:1. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nacaa.com/file.ashx?id=68a77f58-0a9a-45ce-b578-3913c2ffe277
- Sahu, R., Kumar, H., Ristvey, A., Macaulay, L., & Gill, S. (2026). Guide for FAA Part 107 Certification and Drone Registration (FS-2026- 0803). University of Maryland Extension. go.umd.edu/FS-2026-0803.

Field Days and Twilight Tours

- John I. Swarey Farm, 9030 Farmland Place, Charlotte Hall, MD, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., June 23. Registration is not required. Call for information: 301-226-7781.
- AgFS Pasture Walk, Western Maryland Research and Education Center, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville, MD, 6-8:30 p.m., June 23. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pasture-walk-at-university-of-maryland-wmrec-tickets-1988861849330?aff=oddtcreator>.
- Demonstration Cultivar Tasting with Dr. Joe Fiola, Linganore Winecellars, 13601 Glissans Mill Rd, Mt Airy, MD, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., June 24. Contact Joe at (jfiola@umd.edu or 301-503-1962) with questions.
- Maryland Weed Management Tour, Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Dr, Queenstown, MD, 1-3:30 p.m., June 24. Register at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdsm4k4f71d_GPCc-PBRAiHFoQKfqct_z-INGvD_EyG7w-FbA/viewform.
- Blueberry & Blackberry Twilight Tour, Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Dr, Queenstown, MD, 5-7 p.m., June 24. Register at <https://forms.gle/NUDZvxHgZBfvCDpM6> or contact Haley Sater at hsater@umd.edu or (301)226-7718.
- Maryland Crop Scouting School, Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Dr, Queenstown, MD, 9 a.m.-2:45 p.m., June 25. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/maryland-crop-scouting-school-at-wye-tickets-1988090629591?aff=oddtcreator>.
- Lower Shore Vegetable & Small Fruit Twilight Tour, Lower Eastern Shore Research & Education Center, 27664 Nanticoke Road Salisbury, MD, 5-8 p.m., June 25. Register at <https://go.umd.edu/LESRECTwilight> or contact Haley Sater at hsater@umd.edu or (301)226-7718.
- Annual Procrastinator's Pesticide and Urban Nutrient Management Conference, University of Maryland Extension - Montgomery County, 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, MD. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/31st-annual-procrastinators-pesticide-and-urban-nutrient-mgmt-conference-tickets-1980567871820?aff=oddtcreator>.
- Pasture Walk at Maryland Solar Grazing Solutions, TBD, Hagerstown, MD, 6-8 p.m., July 15. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pasture-walk-at-maryland-solar-grazing-solutions-tickets-1988864423028?aff=oddtcreator>.

Natural Resources Conservation Service- Sherri DeGraphenreed:

New NRCS Chief is Colton Buckley

- New Motto: Keeping Working Lands and in Working Hands
- Mission Statement: We deliver practical, voluntary, and locally led conservation solutions that help producers conserve natural resources, strengthen agricultural production, and keep working lands productive for generations to come.
- Vision Statement: An America where working lands remain productive, resilient, and in the hands of those who steward them.

NRCS's seven priorities include:

- Preserve and protect agricultural land;
- Shift to outcome-based conservation and farmer empowerment;
- Re-center field engagement and strengthen technical expertise;
- Expand wildlife conservation and outdoor access;
- Strengthen partnerships by streamlining processes and accountability;
- Optimize mission delivery by strengthening workforce culture; and
- Modernize NRCS infrastructure and technology.

One the MD shore alone there has been over 10 million obligated this year and growing. Introduced new DC for Somerset and Worcester, Tabitha Edwards. Thanked all the DCs for the work being done.

MD is #4 in the country in obligated contracts.

Farm Services Agency- George Turner:

- Secretary Rollins makes emergency assistance loans available in disaster designated areas. 12 counties designated so far. Fast track designation on drought expected in next two weeks. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-events/news/06-15-2026/usda-offers-disaster-assistance-agricultural-producers-maryland>
- Opened the nomination period for county committee members. Deadline is August 3rd.

MASCD – John Swaine:

Highlights

- **Registration is open for MASCD's 2026 Annual Meeting, August 3-5 at the Hyatt in Cambridge.** Early registration closes June 30, late registration closes July 17. A draft agenda has been posted to MASCD's website at: <https://mascd.net/2026-mascd-annual-meeting/>
 - **Area Meetings-** If anyone needs assistance setting up a scheduling poll or virtual meeting link for their Area Meetings ahead of the Annual Meeting, please get in touch with Missy.
 - **ADA Website Compliance Session-** Missy will lead a session for district staff to outline requirements for an ADA-compliant website. There will be time to visit a few district websites and walk through the elements on the site for recommendations. The presentation will be available as a reference to the districts for use after the meeting.
- **MASCD is seeking comments from districts on a draft MDE/MDA MOU,** especially regarding SCDs' role in resolving cases of water pollution caused by agricultural activities. Comments are welcome from individuals or following discussion at Area Meetings. Please share with Jen and Loretta ahead of MASCD's Annual Meeting.
- **2026 Maryland Envirothon-** The 2026 Envirothon was held June 10-11 at Mount St. Mary's University, with 16 counties competing. Congratulations to the Montgomery County Team from Richard Montgomery High School, who will represent Maryland at the NCF-Envirothon next month in Mississippi!

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

- **Last call for Leopold Conservation Award nominations!** Districts should consider nominating their cooperator of the year. Farms of all sizes and operation types are eligible. Nominations are accepted through July 15.

Aq Commission- Gordon Kretser: No Report

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

Frederick County SCD

- The 2026 MASCD Coloring Contest winners for Frederick County were chosen.
- The FCSCD is hosting a Silvopasture Field Day in July.
- The Western Area WIP Meeting will be held on June 29Th.

Washington County SCD

- WCSCD Staff participated in the Maryland Envirothon.
- WCSCD hired a new Urban Planner – Wyatt Newcome.
- Staff finalized all paperwork for participants in the 2025-2026 Cover Crop Program.

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:

Anne Arundel:

- No Report

Calvert:

- Shoreline restoration projects involving oysters are progressing on both regulatory approval milestones and overall citizen interest.

Charles:

- Attended "Wetlands Day" at Middleton Elementary School
- Hosting a County Intern this summer to continue digitizing and archiving approved Small Ponds.

Prince George's:

- Held 3 seedling giveaways in the past month. Gave out 1000 plants to the public

St. Mary's:

- Nothing to Report

District Wide

- District MASCD Pre-meeting June 24th - Poll out for the time - 6 of 25 Supervisors have responded to the online poll; however, the poll is leaning toward a 7 pm call.
- WIP Meeting with Alisha - Proposed June 30, 1-2:30
- Southern MD Envirothon teams placed in the top ten out of 16 teams.

- St Mary's 3rd place, Charles 4th, Calvert 7th, Anne Arundel 9th, Prince George's 10th.
- St Mary's 1st place in the Wildlife Category
- Prince George's 1st place in the Soils Category

Area 3 (Upper Shore) – Steve Freeman: No Report

Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk:

Baltimore County SCD

- The urban staff made a presentation during the Baltimore County Engineering Association's monthly meeting. The purpose was to educate consultants and engineers on ways to improve E&S plan submissions.
- Baltimore County Public Schools sent a team to the State Envirothon.
- The District is working to finalize last year's cover crop.
- District staff attended ACRE training.
- District staff continue to work on SCWQ plans and BMP designs.

Cecil SCD

- No report

Harford SCD

- On May 17th, Harford SCD participated in the **Taste of Harford** event at the Vignon Manor Farm, Darlington, Maryland. Harford SCD managed a display table. Harford SCD promoted our new online conservation planner tool. The event was well attended.
- On June 6th, Harford SCD managed a display table at the annual Anita Leight Estuary Center's sponsored **Wade-In** event. This family event was well attended as well.
- On June 10th & 11th, North Harford High School (NHHS) Envirothon team represented Harford County at the 36th Maryland State Envirothon Competition event held at the Mount St. Mary's University. NHHS placed 1st in the Forestry and the Aquatic categories. NHHS finished 2nd overall at the event. Congratulations to NHHS for a great job! Much thanks to Howard Eakes, Harford County Public Schools, for his years of dedicated service for making the Harford County Envirothon program a success that it is. Howard will be retiring this month.

Howard SCD

- No report.

Montgomery SCD

- Montgomery SCD sent a survey to all Districts concerning how agricultural stormwater management is coordinated locally. The District will provide a report back to the legislature in December as required with the passage of HB1071. Please complete the survey and send it back to John Z as soon as possible.
- Forest Conservation and agricultural land management practices continue to be an issue in Montgomery County. The state's forest conservation law was not intended to regulate agricultural land management; however, since this is not clearly stipulated in the state law local permitting agencies treat an agricultural land management practice as a land conversion/development use. The Montgomery SCD hopes that the legislature will consider clarifying this issue during their next session.

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

Worcester:

- Bylaws for the District have been Approved and Signed as of the June Monthly meeting; copy sent to SSSC.
- MDA Staff have finished with 25/26 Cover Crop Certifications and are looking ahead to the 2026-2027 program.
- MDA Staff have also updated Conservation Plans for (12) *new* MALPF Applications before the July 1 deadline.

Wicomico:

- completing spot checks as requested on satellite imagery review of cover crops
- updating NMPs for poultry operations
- DCA buffer work for producers

Somerset:

- MDA, University of Maryland and NRCS staff from Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico Counties presented a lesson on soils to over 200 4th grade students at the Perdue Henson Junior Achievement Ag-Day.
- MDA staff wrapped up the FY 25/26 MACS cover crop program and are now preparing for the start of the FY 26/27 program.
- Staff continue to work with poultry producers on various tasks.
- MDA staff have been working in coordination with the Somerset County Planning and Zoning Office to ensure that properties in the Maryland Ag-Land Preservation program have an up-to-date conservation farm plan.

Dorchester:

- Submitted all cover crop by June 1st for producers
- Staff working on County Council Annual Report for Soil Conservation.
- Chairman of board is now Wendell Meekins and Vice- Chairman is Christopher Griffith per election at June meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 PM (Webster/Sandi).

Respectfully Submitted,

Loretta Collins, Executive Secretary

MEMBER ATTENDANCE: JUNE 18, 2026 *SIGNIFIES IN-PERSON

Present In-person:

Van Funk (Chair)
Anne-Meredith Webster
Hans Schmidt
Greg Sandi
John Swaine
Gordon Kretser
Sherri Degraphenreed, NRCS proxy
George Turner

Present Virtually:

Diane Flickinger
Amy Posey (Vice-Chair)
Rob Feldt

Absent:

Steve Freeman
Darren Jarboe

ADDITIONAL PARTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Present In-person:

Jen Nelson, MASCD
Alisha Mulkey, MDA
Dave Mister, MDA
Chris Brown, Cecil SCD
Karen Houtman, Dorchester SCD
David Plummer, Howard SCD
Bob Fitzgerald, Somerset SCD
Mark Cary, Somerset SCD
Shawn Smith, Talbot SCD
Chelsea Tyson, Worcester SCD
Val Nasir, Worcester SCD
Kate Tully, UMD
Emmie Woerner, UMD
Jarrod Miller, UD

Present Virtually:

Tracey Rach, Cecil SCD
Dee Dee Saunders, Charles SCD
Gail Myers, PG SCD
Dee Price, Washington County SCD
Lori Flook-Bishop, Washington County SCD
Mark Kendall, Washington County SCD
Rick Glasgow, Wicomico SCD
Byron Petrauskas, MDA
Dwight Dotterer, MDA
Tabitha Edwards, NRCS (Worcester/Somerset)
Quintin Cornwell, Harford SCD