

*Approved Feb 20, 2025*

**State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)**  
**January 16, 2025 (Hybrid)**  
MDA Headquarters, Annapolis, MD  
**Minutes**

Van Funk, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM

The minutes of December 2024 minutes were approved. (Swaine/ Posey)

**SSCC ADMIN**

- FSA: John Sullivan has left MD FSA → Russ Clanton, Deputy State Executive Director will serve as acting SSCC member.
- SCD Personnel Directory coming soon...

The following appointment was announced:

- Carroll SCD- Kim Crone appointed by Carroll County Government (12/18/2024)

**2025 Workplan Review**

Van Funk led a brief review of the draft Workplan. A suggestion was made to include the following January on future workplans to avoid a gap in agenda planning (i.e. have something on deck to discuss at the January meeting at which the Workplan is typically approved).

The Workplan was approved. (Freeman/Swaine)

**State Budget Update**

Guest Speaker: Hans Schmidt, MDA

**Summary:** MD is heading into a \$2.95 billion structural deficit. COVID era-money created a false sense of surplus. Currently the state is spending more money than the revenues coming in. The Governor released an economic agenda earlier in the week and had a budget press conference. Looking under any rock to find funding to keep programs going.

**MACS:** As mentioned at MASCD in October, a lot of MACS money has been coming back from SCDs thus eliciting a lot of questions from the state budget team. Currently anticipate there is enough funding to get through this year and FY26 taking into account what is anticipated in future reversions, based on the pace of reversions in the last year. There is about \$10.4 million right now. Keep in mind: if a project is cancelled or there is money remaining after install, MDA can't utilize it elsewhere until it had gone through the reversion process. Emphasized need for SCD staff to carefully assess commitment level of potential cooperators to avoid time and effort wasted on a project that doesn't happen. Once the money is encumbered it can be up to two years before it can be used for anything else. The MACS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), to be assembled this spring by Jason Keppler, can get into deeper discussions on this.

**Cover Crop Program:** Appears to be safe- about \$25 million total. This year was a record year, in part because farmers chose cover crop over commodity grains.

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**Staffing:** All the following in the budget bill but subject to change: Eight MDA contractual positions to be converted to permanent positions, three within the MACS program. Resource Conservation getting three new positions handling Food Processing Residuals (FPR) Program and one for administering LEEF program. And one position added in the Attorney General's office to handle FPR and probably Resource Conservation on the district side. \$300K is in the Trust fund for technical assistance.

**Urban Ag:** did not get any cuts (fully funded).

**Tree Solutions Act:** Governor indicated cut by \$2 million but some of that will be moved to help with LEEF.

**Departmental Bills:**

Fees have not been updated for 30 or 40 years and are not competitive with neighboring states. Nutrient Management penalty bill is not meant to increase fines related to Annual Implementation Reports (AIR), just streamlining it. Right now, the fines are on a \$250, \$500, \$1000 schedule. The bill makes it just \$1000 after 60 days. The policy has always been that if the AIR comes in during late period- the fine is withdrawn. Once it goes to collections, the fine stands.

Income tax subtraction for equipment: Gives MDA authority to determine qualifying equipment, rather than going through legislature when new technology becomes available.

Access to conservation plans: Currently MDE can get conservation plan access for enforcement situations, but MDA cannot. Not having access to the plan hinders MDA's ability to navigate the issue and find solutions. This would be a rare case strictly for enforcement regarding a bad actor. Districts were surprised by this bill when introduced. Noted that historically, administrators have not discussed departmental bills before they are introduced to the legislature.

Urged supervisors to meet with legislators given the state of the budget at the coming MASCD Winter Meeting Legislative Day.

**Select Post-Presentation Discussion and Q & A:**

*Q: Has MDA factored in the influx of IRA money into the MACS funding situation?* A: MDA is working on that in future discussions.

*Q: Can you define "statistical information" in conservation plan bill?* A: It is the same language (copy and paste) in the previous MDE bill that authorizes its access to conservation plans.

**Legislative Session Update**

Guest Speaker: Michael Mason, Providence Strategies, LLC

Mike gave a sweeping summary of what is happening at the state legislature. Generally, MD does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem.

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Highlights:

- 110 million cut from University of MD System
- Proposed change in MD tax brackets could result in loss of high-income earners in the state.
- With incoming President Medicare/Medicaid/ACA subsidies may be cut leaving MD to address the gaps.
- Other federal agency changes may impact MD tax base (fed employees and contractors leaving state).

[MD DBM](#) website's budget link has a lot of information for those interested. Encouraged staying involved and contacting legislators. Even though there is MACS funding to get through FY26, it will need to be funded down the road.

Contact Jen Nelson or Mike for information on joining bi-weekly calls with Mike on legislative progress.

## **MEMBER REPORTS**

### **MD Department of Agriculture – Hans Schmidt:**

- Huge thanks to the Districts for supporting efforts in containing High Path Avian Influenza. Received high praise from a subject matter expert that indicated Delmarva is second to none in addressing situation. If any SCD staff is interested in helping-contact your Regional Coordinator.
- The Ag Advisory Committee has been approved by the Executive Council at the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). There will be farmers on it at a high level in the CBP hierarchy. They will have input into the revised Watershed Agreement. Every state will have two representatives, at least one being a farmer. Hopefully the group will be up and running in the spring.
- Food Processing Residuals (FPR) permit program is up and running. Issuing permits now.
- Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) for nutrient management have been mailed. MDA encourages submitting AIRs electronically if possible.

### **MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:**

- Northern Long-Eared Bats: Fed govt released guidance recently. DNR is reviewing guidance for state forest lands.
- Layla Durman as Bay Restoration Officer to handle Bay-related work started Jan 8.
- Preparing for the 142<sup>nd</sup> Arbor Day on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **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 is embarking on a strategic planning process to develop a stakeholder-driven plan, granting the university's community partners an opportunity to contribute to the institution's future success. To produce a specialized strategic 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.

UME is inviting stakeholders in Maryland to join us for town hall conversations focused on the future direction of our programs. Come share your insights and help shape the strategic plan that will guide our work in the years ahead. Below is a list of the remaining Town Hall sessions. Please register at <https://extension.umd.edu/about/extension-impact/strategic-plan/>.

- Wye Research and Education Center, 124 Wye Narrows Drive, Queenstown, MD, Noon–2 p.m., January 16
- Anne Arundel Extension Office, 97 Dairy Lane, Gambrills, MD, 5:30–7:30 p.m., January 16
- Baltimore County Extension Office, 1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, MD, 5:30–7:30 p.m., January 21
- Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd, West Friendship, MD 21794, 12:30–2:30 p.m., January 22
- St. Mary's Agriculture Service Center, 26737 Radio Station Way, Leonardtown, MD, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., January 22
- Critique Hall, Plant Sciences Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 9–11 a.m., January 23

Listening sessions have already been conducted at the Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Meeting of Delegates in Cambridge; Allegany County Fairgrounds in Cumberland; Washington County Extension Office in Boonsboro; University of Maryland Eastern Shore Research, Extension and Teaching Farm in Princess Anne, and Wicomico County Extension Office in Salisbury.

The update for AgFS Program positions is below:

#### *AgFS Extension*

- AgFS county educator, Caroline County: Dr. Travis Ford accepted the position and will start January 22
- AgFS IPM specialist, ornamental horticulture: The ornamental horticulture team met. An industry listening session to discuss program needs took place December 3. The position announcement is under development
- AgFS local foods and entrepreneurship specialist: a second round finalist interview will take place January 16
- 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 in late fall or early spring
- Faculty specialist – training: Dr. Bill Phillips accepted the position and started January 13
- Nutrient management advisor, Allegany County: Will be posted later this month
- Nutrient management advisor, Anne Arundel County: Brooke Knauss accepted the position and started January 13
- Nutrient management advisor, Carroll County: Lucy Hayes accepted the position and started in December
- Nutrient management advisor, Charles County: Will be reposted this month
- Nutrient management advisor, Washington County: Will be posted later this month
- Nutrient management advisor, Wicomico and Worcester Counties: Will be posted later this month
- Administrative assistant: Three finalists were interviewed November 22

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## Grant

Jarboe, D., H. Schug, and C. Sasscer III. 2024. Prince George's County Climate-Smart Local Producers Pilot Program Subaward. \$238,479. Part of Prince George's County Government \$3.25 million awarded by USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Program.

*Q: Is there any action that the Board of Supervisors can take to help with nutrient management advisor retention? A: It would be better if it was a permanent position, but that is unlikely with this year's budget.*

*General Comment: Farmers need NM plans for most programs, so the backlog without a writer is a difficult challenge.*

## **Natural Resources Conservation Service - Eric Hines:**

A lot is in a holding pattern due to change in administration. A hiring freeze is expected. There are still a lot of vacancies.

Starting obligation for FY24 contracts. Working through Act Now with IRA funding, but no one knows will happen with that funding. Trying to tie up as much funding as possible in the meantime.

More will be known next month.

## **Farm Services Agency - Laura Pleasanton:**

- Russ Clanton is acting director while waiting for John Sullivan's replacement.
- CRP: No authority for new enrollments. Waiting for info. Working on re-enrollments.
- NRCS offices have been given authority modify contracts on their own.
- Livestock Forage Program is still making payments- more than 1 million paid out. Sign-up end at end of January (tied to severe drought).
- [MASC-Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops](#). 340 applications don't know payment rates yet. Finance assistance to expand domestic markets.
- [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) & Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) sign up Jan 21 -Apr 15<sup>th</sup>.
- [Dairy Margin Coverage Program](#) sign-up Jan 29-Mar 31
- Economic Assistance Payments: FSA has not received anything. Will let everyone know when more information.
- Encouraged to sign-up for updates at Farmers.gov (scroll to bottom of page)

## **MASCD - John Swaine:**

Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 1PM-2PM at State House: Environment and Transportation Committee. John Swaine will represent MASCD at the State of MD Ag Update along with Farm Bureau and the MD Grain Producers, among others.

Feb 3-4: MASCD Winter Meeting. Day 1 is at the Westin in Annapolis. Day 2 starts at 7:30 AM at Mike Mason's office for breakfast with legislators and then individual visits. Registration ends Friday the 17<sup>th</sup>.

## **Ag Commission- Gordon Kretser:**

The first commission meeting of the new year was hampered due to weather, illness, and folks dealing with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) concern- barely made quorum. Did get an update on HPAI from the Secretary.

## **Area 1 (Western) - Diane Flickinger:**

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Frederick County:

- 4Th Annual "Digging Deeper into Soil Health Meeting" on February 12, 2025 at the New Midway Volunteer Fire Company (12019 Woodsboro Pike, New Midway, MD 21775). Our featured speaker is Luke Jones from Understanding Ag. All are welcome to attend! Registration starts at 8 AM and our program runs from 8:30 AM- 3:00 PM. Lunch will be provided. NM & CCA credits will be available. Please RSVP by February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:**

Charles:

- Expecting to be awarded MASCD technical assistance grant for an Ag Planner position

St. Mary's:

- Cooperator Dinner Friday Feb 21<sup>st</sup> at Bay District Volunteer Fire Dept. Thompson Creek is catering. Door open 5:00, dinner at 6:00. Invites go out next week.
- Hog Point shoreline stabilization project on Pax River Naval Air Station has started. SCD provides construction inspection. Army Corps of Engineers permit awarded in January: approximately 4700 linear feet of off-shore breakwater fill and revetment.
- Bruce Young is participating in SSCC Forest Clearing WG.
- Bruce Young is participating in SoMD Ag Development Commission Strategic Planning Focus Group
- SCD sponsoring UMD SoMD 4H conference on the 21<sup>st</sup> at Calvert County fairground.
- Danielle Pressley recently hired as an Ag Resource Conservation Specialist starting Jan 22. Another vacancy will hopefully be filled soon.

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

**Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk:**

Howard:

- Fall farm and conservation tour with 4/5 council members present.
- Distributed fall Conservation Matters newsletter
- FY26 county budget request

Cecil:

- 77<sup>th</sup> Cooperator Banquet is tomorrow at Rising Sun Banquet Hall: Philip Meck and Family. Video profile available on website.

Harford:

- 78<sup>th</sup> Cooperator Dinner in October: Belvedere Farm. John Franklin Sours is Conservationist of the Year.
- January held topic training for Envirothon
- Harford Resource Newsletter distributed in January.

Montgomery:

- SCD will hold Winter Equine Seminar on Feb 20<sup>th</sup>. Open to public Call 301-590-2855 if interested.

**Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Terry Nuwer:**

All counties focused on HPAI

Dorchester:

- Wendell Meekins Jr. honored as Cooperator of the Year.

Somerset:

- Assisting poultry producers and preparing table for Lower Shore Agronomy Day

Wicomico

- Exhibitor at Lower Shore Agronomy Day on Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Working with CAFO permit holders on practices needed for compliance
- Attending winter MASCD

Worcester:

- Congratulations to DM Chelsea Tyson on birth of daughter on Jan 7<sup>th</sup>.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> annual \$500 dollar scholarship applications open until May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Participating at Lower Shore Agronomy Day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Lower Shore Poultry Composting Course on the same day. As of now the course is still planned- pending HPAI status.

Contact Jen Nelson or Mike Mason for detail on virtual bi-weekly updates of session.

The open meeting was adjourned at 11:02 AM(Posey/Krester). in order to discuss SSCC administrative matters amongst SSCC membership including:

- SSCC meeting expectations: in-person attendance, agenda setting
- SSCC expectations: roles of members, engagement, areas for improvement
- SCD Board Supervisor applications, review and selection process

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins  
Executive Secretary

**Attendance: January 16, 2024**

\*in-person

<b>SSCC Member</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Area 1- Western	Diane Flickinger	X	
Area 2- Southern	Amy Posey*	X	
Area 3 - Upper Shore	Steve Freeman* (until 10:40)	X	
Area 4 - Central	Van Funk (Chair)*	X	
Area 5 - Lower Shore	Terry Nuwer	X	
MDA	Hans Schmidt* (until 10:00)	X	
DNR	Rob Feldt	X	
MDE	Jim George	X	
UMD	Darren Jarboe* (until 10:44)	X	

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<b>SSCC Member</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
MASCD President	John Swaine*	X	
Ag Commission	Gordon Kretser	X	
USDA-NRCS (non-voting)	<del>Suzy Daubert</del> Heather Beavan*, Eric Hines *proxy	X	
FSA (non-voting)	<del>Russ Clanton</del> Laura Pleasanton, proxy	X	

<b>Organization /Office</b>	<b>Attendee(s)</b>	<b>Organization /Office</b>	<b>Attendee(s)</b>
Allegany SCD	Adam Heavner	Howard SCD	David Plummer
Anne Arundel SCD		Kent SCD	
Baltimore County SCD	Jim Ensor	Montgomery SCD	John Zawitoski, Kathleen Turner
Calvert SCD	Jason Leavitt	Prince George's SCD	Steve Darcey, John Tarr, Gail Myers, Kim Rush Lynch, Vern Crocker
Caroline SCD		Queen Anne's SCD	Anthony Riggi
Carroll SCD	Matt McMahon	Somerset SCD	Mark Carey
Cecil SCD	Chris Brown, Jessica Zebley	St. Mary's SCD	Bruce Young
Charles SCD	Luis Dieguez, Timothy Wells, Dee Dee Saunders	Talbot SCD	Shawn Smith*, Kelly Hackett*
Dorchester SCD	Karen Houtman	Washington County SCD	Lori Flook-Bishop, Mark Kendle, Dee Price
Frederick County SCD	Heather Hutchinson	Wicomico SCD	Richard Glasgow
Garrett SCD		Worcester SCD	
Harford SCD	Quinton Cornwell		
MDA (HQ)	Alisha Mulkey* Loretta Collins* Byron Petrauskas	MDA (Southern)	Eileen Beard, Adam Lyon
MDA (AG Office)	Tom Filbert	MDA (Western)	Keith Potter
MASCD	Jen Nelson	NRCS	Robert Weaver (Cecil/Harford), Colleen Kiefer (Prince George's, Balt. City, D.C.)
Providence Strategies LLC	Michael Mason		