

Approved Apr 17, 2025

State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)
March 20, 2025 (Hybrid)
Washington County UM Extension Office, Boonsboro, MD
Minutes

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

The minutes of February 2025 meeting were approved. (Swaine/Feldt)

SSCC ADMIN

- Appointments**

J. Bruce Yerkes reappointed by Cecil County Council (2/5/2025 - 1/21/2029)

District	Affiliation	Appointed	Motion/Second	Term Expires
Caroline	At-Large	Gregory N. Turner	Freeman/Swaine	2/10/30
Kent	Farm Bureau	Timothy Redman	Swaine/Freeman	5/28/29
Montgomery	At-Large	Tim McGrath	Feldt/Freeman	3/01/30
Queen Anne's	Farm Bureau	Mark Sultenfuss	Flickinger/Kretser	2/07/30
St. Mary's	Farm Bureau	Robert C. Cooper	Posey/Flickinger	3/30/30
Washington County	At-Large	Joshua Ernst	Freeman/Flickinger	2/12/30

- Financial Disclosure for SSCC Members- **Due April 30**
- April Meeting at MDA Headquarters in Annapolis, MD

Quick Review
Appointments Protocol and SSCC Role

Loretta Collins, MDA, provided a very brief review of the SCD Board Supervisor appointment process. Summary to be sent to District Managers, Board Chairs, and SSCC Area Representatives for distribution during monthly Board meetings.

Loretta also responded to a follow-up question regarding the Open Meetings Act regarding public access to closed meeting minutes. Requests for that information are subject to the Maryland Public Information Act. District Manager can refer to the Attorney General's website for more information: <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/OpenGov/pia.aspx>

Forest Clearing Workgroup Update

Loretta Collins, MDA, provided a very brief update of discussions had and progress made in the Forest Clearing Workgroup. The group includes representatives of DNR, MDE, MDA, NRCS, SSCC, and two District Managers from the Western, Southern, Upper Shore, Central, and Lower Shore areas of Maryland. Currently, the group is working on guidance for district staff

who face questions from landowners seeking to clear forested land for crop production or pasture. Later, issues of enforcement will be considered. Other district staff are encouraged to reach out to Loretta or group participants with questions, comments, and/or concerns.

Food Processing Residuals **Overview of Requirements and Permitting Progress**

Guest Speaker: Dwight Dotterer, MDA

Dwight provided a background on Food Processing Residuals (FPR) in Maryland, the current law and regulations, the permit application process, and the how implementation is going through MDA's Nutrient Management Program.

Select Discussion and Q & A:

Q: Why have nutrient management plans been a challenge in the applications? A: There could be several reasons. Among them are different standards for soil sampling [under FPR] that have required re-submission of soil samples.

Q: Who is applying for the permit (e.g., landowner, generator, broker...)? A: It could be anyone. So far of the two applicants we have are broker companies that have farmers under them- mostly due to the bond cost.

Q: Who does enforcement if the permit is not obtained before application? A: MDA will be responsible for enforcement. MDA cannot stop action but can impose fines.

Spotlight on Western MD

Harry Strite, Chair of the Washington County SCD Board of Supervisors, came as a special guest speaker to discuss the history of Creek Bend Dairy Farm, his experience with the FSCAP program (now known as Bay-Friendly Farming or BFF), and his perspective on his time as a Board Supervisor.

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

Frederick County:

- The FCSCD "Digging Deeper into the Soil Health Meeting", held on February 26Th was a big success. Over 119 people participated from Frederick and surrounding counties.
- FCSCD had a booth at the Mobilize Frederick's Annual Climate Summit held at Hood College on February 28-March 1.
- Staff participated in the Sabillasville Environmental School STEAM Day.
- Environthon - Training Day March 25, Competition April 22. Over 120 students registered to participate.

Washington County:

- Working with Washington County Government to develop a Backyard Chicken Ordinance within the County's Zoning Ordinance.
- District to participate in the Keedysville Green Team Springfest, Saturday, April 12, 2025
- Washington County Envirothon scheduled, Thursday, April 3, 2025 (6 High Schools and 3 Middle Schools) participating

Allegany:

- MASCD Summer Meeting, August 4-6, will be held at Rocky Gap Resort in Flintstone MD.

MEMBER REPORTS

MD Department of Agriculture – Hans Schmidt:

- Expressed enthusiasm for development of LEEF. Sorting through listening session feedback. It is part of the Bay Legacy Act being reviewed by the legislature.
- High path avian influenza seems to be waning. A recent backyard flock infection where majority of birds were dead before contacting authorities. Emphasized importance of public education. Districts encouraged to educate county officials that interact with public. Outreach is essential. Thanks again to the SCD staff that have helped support relief efforts.

Legislature:

- Challenges continue with budget constraints. State looking to move money around (take from one area to support another). Now looking at \$3.3 billion short-fall. Tough decisions are ahead. MDA-Resource Conservation could be impacted: Cover Crop Program, Manure Transport, Staffing, NM plan writing, etc. House is currently working on budget and things are in limbo. Testimony has concluded for the moment. It is NOT too late to call your legislative representatives. MAUF, Rural Legacy could be impacted. This would impact the NEXT FOUR years.
- Cover Crop Technical Advisory Committee: If Trust Fund money is cut- will be affected. 2024 was a record year- probably because commodity prices were down. Plan now: webinar on Cover Crop program to get ready for sign-up and encourage participation.
- Very good chance session will be extended to mid-May, as balanced, approved budget must happen before closing.
- Budget issues are among the worst most have seen. Farming community is getting hit hard. It is urgent that Supervisors reach out. Program effected will impact personal business. GO TO NACD FLY-IN.

Q: There are 55 positions being paid through Trust Fund. Are those positions at risk? A: We are working through that. Enthusiasm amongst legislature is for keeping positions- but no guarantees. Governor has said first priority is saving positions.

Comment: Jen Nelson and Mike Mason created a template letter that SCDs can adapt to their needs to communicate with representatives.

Q: What is the status with SCD-MDA MOUs? A: [Byron Petrauskas] We won't know numbers, but budget request with what SCD needs are will get out in the next couple of weeks, but hard numbers are unknown until legislative session ends.

- Food Processing Residuals: Why is MDA doing this? FPR is important to the circular system of agriculture. Needed to improve process. Expected a new attorney to be hired for OAG to deal with FPR.

Comment: Hans thanked for speaking at Climate Summit in Frederick- credit given to MDA staff especially Nadya Chehab for preparation.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

- DNR Forestry staff responded to 27 wildfires on 3,487.4 acres during this period, and have responded to 75 wildfires for 5,897.1 acres so far in 2025. February and March are Maryland's fire season and we've had a lot of windy days and dry weather that drive fire. Most of the larger burned areas have been in marsh on the Eastern Shore.
- DNR Park Service Director Angela Crenshaw was named Maryland Woman of the Year 2025, as one of USA TODAY's Women of the Year. We're very proud of her.

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- DNR Forestry is in the midst of tree planting season, and DNR Forestry staff are busy planting trees across the state. We are still working toward the 5 million Tree planting goal by 2031, and we're approximately 1 million trees planted. Please direct interested landowners to the Forest Service's 5 Million Trees staff.

MD. Department of Environment – Jim George: no report

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

For FY 2025, the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program has received requests for 1,230 plans, 820 have complete information, and 745 plans have been completed or sent for faculty specialist review.

The University of Maryland will review all major expenditures, which includes all open positions, all new capital projects, and large discretionary operating projects. This affects all AgFS Program position searches. The current openings are below:

AgFS Extension

- AgFS IPM specialist, ornamental horticulture applicants are being evaluated. The best consideration date was March 17, and it will remain open until filled. The job announcement is at https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/details/Agent--Extension-Specialist---Entomology-in-Ornamental-Horticulture-IPM-_JR100929.
- AgFS local foods and entrepreneurship specialist position applicants are being reviewed.
- AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: The position is being evaluated

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

- Administrative assistant: Mahdia Haque has been hired. She started February 24
- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted in early spring
- Nutrient management advisor positions in Allegany, Charles, Washington, and Wicomico/Worcester Counties has posted to the UMD jobs website at https://umd.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UMCP/details/Coordinator--Nutrient-Management-Advisor_JR100744?q=nutrient%20management. The best consideration date is February 28.

The UME Assistant Director of Operations position is open to internal candidates and has three applicants under review.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Suzy Daubert:

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

- NRCS has resumed issuing payments to farmers for conservation program contracts that are funded through the IRA. New contracts with farmers are moving forward with traditional Farm Bill program funding.
- Secretary Rollins continues to evaluate other paused funding as she ensures that programs are focused on directly supporting farmers.
- While some Maryland partnership agreements include IRA funding that is on hold, Farm Bill work is continuing through these agreements.

Personnel

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- All terminated probationary employees were returned to pay status and received back pay, from the date of termination.
- USDA is working to develop a phased plan for return-to-duty. While those plans materialize, all probationary employees will be paid.
- We are developing contingency plans to ensure we can continue working with partners and landowners to get conservation on the ground in Maryland.

Lease Terminations

- USDA is optimizing building capacity and consolidating underutilized offices to reduce inefficiencies while continuing to prioritize customer service for farmers and rural communities.
- The Maryland NRCS state office continues to operate out of USDA's Beltsville Area Research Center, with an estimated August 2025 move-in for the new shared FSA/NRCS state office in Annapolis. Lease terminations have not affected any other NRCS offices in Maryland.
- For further information regarding the termination of federal leases, please contact the General Services Administration (GSA).

Agency Reduction in Force and Reorganization Plans (ARRP)

- Agencies were required to submit a phase 1 ARRP by March 13. Phase 1 ARRPs focused on initial agency cuts and reductions. Phase 2 plans are due April 14 and include a proposed reorganization structure. Phase 2 plans are expected to be implemented by September 30, 2025.

General

- NRCS offices continue to provide technical and financial assistance made available through Farm Bill programs, like EQIP and CSP.
- No matter what changes come, NRCS will continue to deliver voluntary, locally led, science-based solutions by supporting conservation, working with landowners, and strengthening our partnerships.
- We appreciate the patience our partners and customers have shown as we work together through this time of change.

Farm Services Agency – Russ Clanton:

- Still operating under extension of Farm Bill . No new authorization for CRP – continue with what exists- but no new enrollment.
- Livestock Forage Program: 2024 had 385 applications→ \$1.3 million paid out
- Spring grazing has started. We are in a D2 drought. If it goes on for 8 consecutive weeks the Livestock Forage Program will be available.
- Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) sign up is March 31st
- Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) ECAP sign-up until Apr 15
- Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) started (\$10+billion available). Certified 2024 acres qualify and will get an application. Filled application processed at FSA office. Payments out as soon as approved. Corn is ~\$42/ac, wheat ~\$30/ac, soybeans ~\$29/ac. Other funds are \$20 billion for natural disasters- should be out in next couple of months.

MASCD – John Swaine:

Upcoming Events- MASCD and SSCC have a few meetings coming up that are close to each other on the calendar. Make sure that you have the correct dates and locations!

- **SSCC Meeting-** March 20 at the Washington County UME Office
- **MASCD BOD-** March 25 at MDA in Annapolis, with a virtual option to listen in- materials will be shared closer to the meeting
- **NACD Fly-In-** March 26 in Washington, DC (details below)

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Budget & Funding Updates- On the federal side, the situation related to the federal funding freeze continues to be fluid. MASCD still hasn't received formal guidance related to the status of our NRCS Agreement funds. Our NFWF grant to support MarylandBFF remains paused, while our grant to support implementation of conservation projects adjacent to tax ditches is "business as usual". NRCS lost about 18-19 employees, with Eastern Shore Counties being especially hard hit. The funding freeze also affects partner organizations like RC&D Councils. If the freeze continues and/or agreements are cancelled, there are about 55 NRCS and partner employees potentially affected, representing a significant impact to our capacity to deliver technical assistance. An additional uncertainty with the federal budget is the potential for a partial government shutdown if a continuing resolution isn't passed by March 14.

On the state budget, analysts from LGS proposed that the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays Trust Fund be repurposed to cover DNR operating costs. (Read the recommendations at <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2026fy-budget-docs-operating-K00A-Department-of-Natural-Resources.pdf> and view the budget breakdown of the Trust Fund on p. 28 at <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2026fy-budget-docs-operating-CHESBAY-Chesapeake-Bay-Overview.pdf>)

Among the many programs that the move would impact, about \$11.3M in cover crop funding and 55 positions are included in the fund. Mike and Jen have made visits to senators and delegates to make them aware of these impacts, and encourage districts to reach out to their elected officials.

MASCD has created outreach materials to reach out to both state and federal elected officials, available at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z9nD7uCgJ6DkCO5a9W8cUydmCtMErwKV>

NACD Fly-In- NACD is hosting its annual Fly-In on March 26. Missy is working on setting up meetings with elected officials so let her know ASAP if you plan on attending so we can coordinate with you and the scheduling staff. NACD is hosting training webinars on March 18 & 20- you can sign up for those, RSVP to NACD and access their issue papers at <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/spring-fly-in/> NACD also released a report with the results of their survey on the impacts of the funding freeze on districts, available on their Fly-In page and at <https://www.nacdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/NACD-Executive-Action-Survey-Report-2025.03.07.pdf> It's well worth taking a few moments to review the report and see how the freeze is affecting states and districts across the country.

Jen on Leave- Jen will be on leave starting March 12 for approximately 3-6 weeks. Missy, Chelsea, Marguerite and Mike are available during that time to answer questions and provide any assistance.

Upcoming Events & Deadlines

DATE	EVENT
March 25, 2025	MASCD BOD Meeting, MDA
March 26, 2025	NACD Fly-In
July 24-30, 2025	NACD's 2025 Summer Conservation Forum & Tours, Milwaukee, WI

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August 4-6, 2025	MASCD 2025 Annual Meeting, Rocky Gap Hotel & Casino, Flintstone
September 21-25, 2025	NACD Northeast Region Meeting, East Syracuse, NY

Ag Commission- Gordon Kretser:

MD Ag Committee-

- 2.5 % tax proposition business to business. Drafted a letter of concern asking ag to be exempt from tax
- Refresh for MD's Best- looking into new logo

Ag Commission- met in Vienna at Layton's Choice Vineyard with Sen. Angela Alsobrooks

Watersheds Strategies Committee-

- Solar-siting on ag ground- confusion related to Sediment and Erosion Control Permits. There is a requirement to vegetate and maintain- but the Sediment and Erosion plan is compiled outside PSC conditions. Contractors go by S&E plan that does not include the same vegetative requirements. Acres of solar are implemented without appropriate vegetative mix (pollinator habitats). There is no enforcement for pollinator requirements. If District Managers are aware of this, they can look up PSC requirements before signing off on Sediment and Erosion plans. If pollinator requirements are in S&E plan- must be followed. Districts can be a big help here.

Q: How do we access documents for pollinator when in the review stage? A: Look up the docket case on Public Service Commission website: <https://www.psc.state.md.us/>

Comment: Mixtures could be better thought out in these plans. Pollinator mixes do not always address erosion and sediment control. Response: Work has been done to improve these mixes and sent to relevant agencies. This work can be shared with the Districts for review and comment.

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey:

Anne Arundel:

- No Report.

Calvert:

- Envirothon training
- Annual dinner is TONIGHT Thursday March 20th

Charles:

- The Charles County Envirothon Competition will be held on April 9th.
- Charles SCD, SMDAC, UME are having a New and Beginning Farm Equipment Demonstration Day on April 12th at the Charles SCD property.
- Charles SCD's Annual Cooperator Dinner will be held May 21st.

Prince George's:

- Cooperators Dinner April 25th.
- Invitations have gone out. Anyone interested in attending and didn't receive an invitation, please contact the office by phone or email.

St. Mary's:

- Work on the Hog Point shoreline at Naval Air Station Patuxent River is continuing. Two of the Reaches are at 90% completed. These two Reaches were high priority as they were in front of Terrapin nesting habitat. Approximately 1700 feet of rock sill has been installed and the shoreline backfilled with sand. Received good news that

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with the impending government shutdown, this project has prior year funding and may continue without any stops if the federal government shuts down.

- St. Mary's County Envirothon training is scheduled for Thursday, March 20th. We have 4 high schools participating with approximately 52 students. The county competition is on April 8th and we will have ten teams competing.
- Bruce Young gave a 1 hour presentation on shoreline stabilization projects to the St. Mary's County Garden Club. Highlighted the pros and cons of living shorelines vs. revetments.
- Supervisors Cooper and Boothe along with manager Young attended the St. Mary's County Commissioners meeting where they were presented citations proclaiming March 16-22 as Agriculture week.
- St. Mary's SCD will be participating in two upcoming events in April. They are the Easter Festival on April 12th and Earth Day on April 26th.

District Wide

- Dinner dates: 3/20, 4/25, and 5/21!
- Environthon Trainings and Competitions are in full swing and there are lots of students involved!

Area 3 (Upper Shore) – Steve Freeman:

- Kent Dinner on Apr 11th. A lot of legislators will be there. It's a great event. Reach out to Steve or Robert Baldwin.

Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk: NO REPORT

Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Terry Nuwer:

Dorchester:

- Farmers are starting to report MACS Cover Crop Burndown.
- Possible DCA Grant through NFWF for implementing Conservation on chicken farms in Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Somerset:

- Somerset SCD is seeing the same things as Dorchester and Wicomico. Farmers are starting to report MACS cover crop termination. We have also had a couple of people ask about the steps they need to take in order to construct poultry houses.
- In addition one MDA planner is working to get their NRCS planner certification renewed and another one is working to get their CNMP certification.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 AM (Posey/Swaine).

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins
Executive Secretary

Attendance: February 20, 2024

*in-person

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	Terry Nuwer		X
MDA	Hans Schmidt*	X	
DNR	Rob Feldt	X	
MDE	Jim George (until 9:50)		X
UMD	Darren Jarboe*	X	
MASCD President	John Swaine*	X	
Ag Commission	Gordon Kretser*	X	
USDA-NRCS (non-voting)	Suzy Daubert*	X	
FSA (non-voting)	Russ Clanton*	X	

Organization /Office	Attendee(s)	Organization /Office	Attendee(s)
Allegany SCD		Howard SCD	
Anne Arundel SCD	David Scheler	Kent SCD	
Baltimore County SCD		Montgomery SCD	
Calvert SCD	Jason Leavitt	Prince George's SCD	Steve Darcey, Gail Myers John Tarr
Caroline SCD		Queen Anne's SCD	Anthony Riggi
Carroll SCD		Somerset SCD	Mark Carey
Cecil SCD		St. Mary's SCD	Bruce Young
Charles SCD	Luis Dieguez, Timothy Wells, Jessica Linn	Talbot SCD	
Dorchester SCD	Karen Houtman	Washington County SCD	Lori Flook-Bishop*, Dee Price*, Harry Strite*
Frederick County SCD	Heather Hutchinson*, John Falkenstein*, Steve Leatherman*	Wicomico SCD	Richard Glasgow
Garrett SCD		Worcester SCD	

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Harford SCD			
MDA (HQ)	Alisha Mulkey* Loretta Collins* Jason Keppler Byron Petrauskas	MDA (Southern)	Adam Lyon Eileen Beard
MDA (OAG Office)	Tom Filbert	MDA (Western)	Keith Potter*
MASCD	Jen Nelson	NRCS	Eric Hines*
FSA	Laura Pleasanton, Charlie Bennett*	Chesapeake Bay Foundation	Alan Girard