

Approved May 15, 2025

State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)
April 17, 2025 (Hybrid)
MDA Headquarters, Annapolis, MD
Minutes

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

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

SSCC ADMIN

- Appointments: None
- Financial Disclosure for SSCC Members- **Due April 30**
- May 15 meeting at Caroline SCD Office in Denton, MD

Quick Review
Ethical Requirements for Supervisors

Loretta Collins, MDA, provided a very brief review of the Ethical Guidance adopted by the SSCC in 2003, based on the Maryland Public Ethics Law. The ethical guidelines can also be found in the Supervisor's Handbook. Summary to be sent to District Managers, Board Chairs, and SSCC Area Representatives for distribution during monthly Board meetings.

MEMBER REPORTS

MD Department of Agriculture – Hans Schmidt:

Legislative Session Budget Highlights:

- The overall all general state budget is 0.1% larger- but the general funds are \$400 million less than in FY 25
- 1% COLA for all employees and 2.5 increments for those on bargaining units
- Overall state vacancy target rate is 9.5%, statewide actually 10%- but MDA is just over 5%. MDA recognized for the low rate, however FY 26 will not be able to fill positions as fast.
- MDA funding is \$142 million, down \$170 million for FY 25.
 - MAUF down \$15 million
 - Program Open Space down 25 million over next 4 years.
- Fee increases:
 - Weights and measures, nurseries, horse board
 - Others not approved include state chemist, beekeeping seed wholesale
 - Nutrient Management fees restructured- but not increased
 - Emphasized that fee increases have not happened since the 1980s, making it hard to run programs
- Staff positions
 - Resource Conservation got 4.3 new positions and 8 contractual conversions.
 - Did not get contractual conversions requested in supplemental budget- 12 positions.

Approved May 15, 2025

- Trust funds not cut as previously feared- therefore available for staffing and cover crops.
- Cover crops
 - previously had a slush fund that was used up to cover the record high enrollment in 2025.
 - Will be trimming program (ex: lower base payment) because no extra funds moving forward.
- District Operations
 - SCDs should expect funding cuts due to budgetary constraints
- Bay Legacy Act
 - LEEF approved for \$500K (asked for \$900K)

WIP Progress

- Supervisors are encouraged to attend 1:1 WIP virtual meetings between Elizabeth Hoffman and districts to get a good understanding of what SCD staff is working on.

Resource Conservation

- Annual staff retreat at Sandy Point State Park on May 14th

Q: Can District Managers get lists of staff paid out of Trust Fund?

A: [Byron P.] Have to check with HR on who can receive that information.

MD. Department of Natural Resources – Rob Feldt:

5 Million Trees goal

- Middle of planting season- 400 acres, 160,000 trees planted
- Reach 1 million trees (5 million goal by 2031)

State Forest Audit

- Report not back yet but no findings (which is good)

Arbor Day was Apr 2

- Melissa Nash- Tree Farm Inspector of the Year
- Rock Lodge Trust- Tree Farm of the Year

Legislative Session:

- Incidental Take Bill related to bat species: allow staff to provide incidental take permits for timber sales

Federal Budget

- Concerned about USFS inventory and analysis staff that provide critical data to the staff. Right now things are holding steady- but any cuts would impact workload capacity at state level.

UME Western MD Forester

- Dr. Daniel Pratson recently came on board. Happy to have him on board.

Q: Where can Districts get saplings for their outreach events?

A: This time of year best to reach out to Local Forestry Board- they may have leftovers. But better to order in the fall for spring programs. Rob can help facilitate.

Q: Will the bat bill impact forest harvest permits?

Approved May 15, 2025

A: Senate Bill 946/House Bill 894. There will be time of year restrictions. DNR is looking at impact on state forests but can provide guidance to SCDs for private land.

Q: *What is the density date for the 5 million trees?*

A: [DNR] It varies, but we shoot for 426/ac. Depends on site. [MDA] MDA submits acres. Its assuming 400 tree/acre for riparian buffers. It should be in Conservation Tracker.

Q: *How much farmland will be lost to this goal? Reports of cropland being lost on state land.*

A: I don't have an estimate. Usually it's old pasture and ag fields. Don't target prime farm land, but up to the discretion of local forester.

Q: *How do we report trees planted?*

A: <https://five-million-tree-tracking-tool-maryland.hub.arcgis.com/pages/register-trees-survey>

MD. Department of Environment – Jim George:

Land Management Admin: Currently registered CAFO owners/operators need to submit their NOI for continued coverage by May 7, 2025. All registered CAFO operators were sent letters and an updated NOI form to fill out and return to MDE. MDE's permit requires these NOIs be submitted to MDE 60 days prior to the permits expiration date. NOIs can be submitted via email (preferred) to cafopermits.mde@maryland.gov or to:

Maryland Department of the Environment
Land and Materials Administration
Resource Management Program/AFO Division
1800 Washington Blvd., Suite 610
Baltimore, Maryland 21230-1719

University of Maryland Extension – Darren Jarboe:

For FY 2025, the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program has received requests for 1,299 plans, 882 have complete information, and 822 plans have been completed or sent for faculty specialist review (over 93%) through March 31, 2025.

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 interviewed. The position is being evaluated.
- AgFS local foods and entrepreneurship specialist position applicants are being reviewed. The position is being evaluated.
- AgFS county educator, Prince George's County: The position is being evaluated.
- AgFS county educator, Frederick County: The position is being evaluated.

Approved May 15, 2025

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

- Program director and faculty specialist: The position description will be revised and reposted. The position is being evaluated.
- Nutrient management advisor applicants for Allegany, Charles, Washington, and Wicomico/Worcester Counties are being interviewed. The position is being evaluated.

The UME Assistant Director of Operations position candidates were interviewed last Friday.

Dr. Daniel Pratson has joined UME as natural resources Extension specialist focused on forest stewardship. He recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of Vermont. Daniel is located at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center in Keedysville.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Eric Hines:

- 500 million for EQIP this year
- 200 million for CSP for this year
- No IRA updates
- RC&D funding is paused
- Frederick is moving to new office on Apr 24
- Travel restrictions in place. Training are being done centralized and local
- 2nd “fork in the road” resignation option. 13 in MD took it (mostly probationary)
- Reduction in Force (RIF) supposed to be coming next week. Don’t know what that will look like.

Farm Services Agency – Laura Pleasanton:

- Still operating under the second extension of the Farm Bill. The CR was passed, keeping us funded through the end of September.
- Still no authority for new CRP. Maintaining what we have already approved. National conservation staff can only give a cleared statement so there is no indication of what is next.
- Appreciate any status reviews for reenrollments that are happening proactively on behalf of NRCS, MDA, and technical staff, especially due to staffing changes.
- Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) signup is ongoing until August 15th. This is the 10 billion provided through American Relief Act. Applications have been mailed to all producers and they can also just stop by the county office to sign if that is their preference. Most payments going out within weeks of signing. So far 23.5 million dollars already paid out in Maryland.
- Overall, the intention of ECAP is to provide emergency aid to producers of eligible commodities for which expected revenue in crop year 2024 is below the projected per-acre cost of production. This is to help farmers pay down debt related to their 2024 crops and assist them in obtaining financing for the 2025 crop year.
- Unfortunately, drought conditions may lead to additional LFP this year with many counties already in D2 drought on the western shore.
- As for staffing and how that will impact FSA, there is nothing to share at this time, but Russ will share when there is more about how DRP 2.0 has impacted Maryland FSA.

MASCD – John Swaine:

- Federal Funding Update- IRA funds are still frozen. As a result, our NFWF "Bay Friendly Farming" grant is on pause. I estimate that our NRCS Agreement has sufficient non-IRA funding to cover expenses through 2026 at our current rate.
- Registration is open for MASCD's 2025 Annual Meeting on August 4-6 at Rocky Gap Resort. We're please to announce Alice Crothers as our keynote speaker! Business meetings will begin in the afternoon on August 4, and will wrap up just before lunch on August 6. Visit <https://mascd.net/2025-mascd-annual-meeting/> to register and for further details.
- NACD Fly-In- we had a good day in DC on March 26, with productive meetings with our Maryland delegation & staff. It's been a challenging year so far and important to get out and talk with our elected officials about the importance of conservation funding.
- Erosion & Sediment Control Training Needs- MASCD had reached out to the districts to hear from them about the critical need for technical training for E&S staff. Thanks to all of the districts who provided their feedback and comments. We've shared that with MDE and are looking forward to hearing their ideas on how to address this shared priority.
- Underwood & Associates invites district staff and partners to a Field Day on May 5 in Anne Arundel County to visit two restoration projects- the Clagett Farm in Harwood and Jabez Branch in Millersville. If anyone is interested in attending, let Jen or Missy know.
- Nominations are open for the Leopold Conservation Award to recognize a farmer who goes above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat. The nomination period is open through July 15. More information is available at <https://sandcountyfoundation.org/uploads/2025-CFN-Maryland.pdf>

Ag Commission- Gordon Kretser: No Report

Area 1 (Western) – Diane Flickinger:

Carroll:

- The Carroll County Envirothon Contest was held on April 15th. There were 30 students on 6 teams that participated. The winning team was from Century High School.
- The Carroll SCD just welcomed Kayla Hartman as their new PT Secretary.

Washington County:

- Washington County SCD will be celebrating their 85TH Anniversary Year (established in 1940). They will be having an Open House in August. Invites will be going out in the coming months.
- The allowed termination of Cover Crops within the Cover Crop Program (with certain parameters) has begun with certification to occur no later than June 3, 2025.
- The Washington County Region has been blessed with much needed rain in the past couple of weeks.

Frederick County:

- The George A. Nicholson, Sr. Memorial Scholarship Contest closed with 8 applicants.

Approved May 15, 2025

- The Frederick County Envirothon Contest will be held on April 22. There are 125 students participating as 24 Teams in the event.
- The Frederick County SCD will be moving into the new FSA and NRCS facilities on 4/24.

Allegheny:

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

Garrett: no report

Area 2 (Southern) - Amy Posey: NO REPORT

Anne Arundel:

- No Report.

Calvert:

- We had a successful annual dinner and Envirothon competition.
- Working to make the last push for WIP and waiting again to see how the Federal Gov.'s decisions will impact our staff and capability.

Charles:

- Charles County Envirothon was held April 9th.
- New and Beginning Farmer Ag Equipment Demonstration Day was held on April 12th at the Charles SCD farm. Event sponsored by UME, SMADC, and SCD.
- Charles SCD Annual Cooperator dinner to be held May 21st

Prince George's:

- Held a farmer/producer's forum in partnership with The Capital Market. The forum was designed to be an open discussion to discuss the challenges producers are facing b/c of recent Executive Orders, reductions in program funding and general challenges facing new/beginning and urban farmers. good turnout with 20+ producers in attendance as well as representation from the County Executive's office, the County Council, MDA and State Comptroller's office. Capital Area Market will create a report from the meeting for distribution.
- Held a brainstorming session w Bruce Young and Barry Burch to discuss fund raising for the 2027 NCF National Envirothon hosted by Maryland. Encourage all SCDs to find sponsors and contributors. No amount is too small, and no amount is too large. Bruce can give details on website, sample contribution request letters etc.
- PGSCD Annual Dinner Friday April 25th. Seats are still available. Contact the office if you would like to attend.

St. Mary's:

- St. Mary's Envirothon competition was held on April 8th. Ten teams from 4 high schools participated. Leonardtown H.S. came in first place with a score of 444 points out of a potential 500. A second team from Leonardtown finished in second place and Chopticon H. S. finished third.
- The Hog Point shoreline stabilization project is still under construction. Reach A through Reach E have been constructed for over 4000 linear feet of offshore breakwaters, sills and revetment. Sand is still being hauled to the site for backfilling behind the breakwaters and the sills. Construction of all of the structures should be completed by

Approved May 15, 2025

this week. Sand fill will continue through next week and the marsh grass will be planted in May.

- District staff participated in the Recreation and Parks sponsored Easter Festival on March 12th. Kettle corn was popped and sold to support the Envirothon program. The district will also participate in the Earth Day Festival at Summerseat Farms on Saturday, April 26, 2025.

District Wide

- Envirothon is happening this month or next for all districts.

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

Area 4 (Central) – Van Funk:

Baltimore County SCD

- The Baltimore County SCD lost one NRCS employee.
- The BCSCD is working with the other CA districts with planning the MASCD Summer Meeting.
- The BCSCD has completed negotiations with Baltimore County on our grant and fee increase request

Cecil SCD

- On 3/28 CSCD provided a 50 min presentation to the Cecil County School of Technology – Ag Science Class on District activities and conservation done at Long Green Farms. Subsequently a tour of Long Green Farms was held on 4/1 giving students a firsthand look at the Dairy Farm operations.
- On 4/9 CSCD and the Cecil Land Trust hosted "Ag Day on the Farm" at the Dupont farm in Fair Hill, MD. The event highlighted several District planted cover crop plots, a drone seeding and crimper demonstration, and a variety of speakers. Two nutrient management credits were available for participants. There were slightly over 80 in attendance.
- On 4/24 CSCD will host its annual Envirothon Competition at the Fair Hill Nature Center. The district expects approximately 56 students in attendance.
- On 4/29 to 5/1 CSCD will be part of the Cecil County Ag Education Days. The three-day event will host approximately 1,200 seventh grade students at the Cecil County Fairgrounds where they will be guided through 12 learning stations related to Food Systems, Land and Water, Animal Science, and Ag Technology. The district has been heavily involved in planning the event with other county Ag Agencies.

Harford SCD

- On April 1st, Harford SCD published the latest edition of the "The Harford Resource" newsletter and emailed out digital copies. On April 11th, paper copies were mailed out to SCDs and cooperators on the district's mailing list.
- On April 15th, Harford SCD coordinated and led the Harford County Envirothon Spring Workshop at Harford Glen. The main objective of this workshop was to prepare the Envirothon teams for the County competition which is scheduled for May 2nd.
- On June 25th, Harford SCD, Harford County Farm Bureau, and UME will be co-sponsoring a legislative ag tour for local and state legislative representatives as well as County and State dignitaries.
- Coming this Fall, Harford SCD plans to hold their annual Cooperator's Dinner. Please stay tuned for more information this summer.

Area 5 (Lower Shore) – Terry Nuwer:

All counties:

Approved May 15, 2025

- Reporting cover crop termination/burndown in SQL and assistance for poultry producers with compliance paperwork and plan review for Sediment and Erosion Control plans and several new MACS capital projects for new and expanding poultry operations.

Worcester SCD:

- Scholarship is open to local students through May 1 and they have submitted 1 application to the MDA Conservation Buffer Initiative Program by the April deadline.

The meeting was adjourned to closed session at 10:38 AM (Posey/Jarboe).

In closed session, the SSCC members discussed administrative matters related to SCD Board Supervisor applications, review and selection process.

Moving forward, the Chair will require the SSCC to go into closed session to discuss applicants prior to appointment (**General Provisions Art. § 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")

Respectfully Submitted,



Loretta Collins
Executive Secretary

Attendance: April 17, 2025

*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		X
UMD	Darren Jarboe*	X	
MASCD President	John Swaine*	X	
Ag Commission	Gordon Kretser		x
USDA-NRCS (non-voting)	Suzy Daubert Eric Hines*, proxy	X	
FSA (non-voting)	Russ Clanton Laura Pleasanton, proxy	X	

Approved May 15, 2025

Organization /Office	Attendee(s)	Organization /Office	Attendee(s)
Allegany SCD		Howard SCD	
Anne Arundel SCD	David Scheler	Kent SCD	
Baltimore County SCD	Jim Ensor	Montgomery SCD	
Calvert SCD	Jason Leavitt	Prince George's SCD	Steve Darcey, Gail Myers, John Tarr
Caroline SCD		Queen Anne's SCD	
Carroll SCD		Somerset SCD	Mark Carey
Cecil SCD		St. Mary's SCD	Bruce Young
Charles SCD	Luis Dieguez, Timothy Wells, Dee Dee Saunders	Talbot SCD	
Dorchester SCD	Karen Houtman	Washington County SCD	Lori Flook-Bishop, Mark Kendle, Dee Price
Frederick County SCD	Kendra McAfee	Wicomico SCD	Richard Glasgow
Garrett SCD		Worcester SCD	Chelsea Tyson
Harford SCD	Ruth Cassilly, Quintin Cornwell		
MDA (HQ)	Alisha Mulkey, Loretta Collins*, Jason Keppler, Byron Petrauskas*	MDA (Southern)	
MDA (OAG Office)	Tom Filbert	MDA (Western)	Keith Potter
MASCD	Jen Nelson*	NRCS	Colleen Kiefer
FSA		Chesapeake Bay Foundation	