

State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC)

Meeting Attendance Guidance

Background: Prior to the 2020 suspension of in-person activities due to the COVID pandemic, meetings of the SSCC were conducted exclusively at MDA headquarters or nearby facilities. The SSCC quickly transitioned to virtual-only meetings in 2020 and ultimately moved to a hybrid model used today in which in-person attendance in Annapolis is voluntary and others join via a virtual meeting platform. The transition to a hybrid meeting model has been generally positive, as it greatly eases the burden of attending and participating in monthly meetings. In addition to the obvious benefit of removing transportation obstacles, it allows for participation when unexpected conflicts arise. The hybrid model also allows SSCD staff, board supervisors, and other interested parties to attend the public meetings with ease.

Purpose of Guidance: Along with the positive benefits of the hybrid model, the SSCC membership acknowledges that it is difficult to maintain attention while attending remotely (even when the technology is functioning smoothly) and remote attendance may ultimately hinder robust discussion and progress on important issues. There is a consensus that regular face-to-face interaction helps foster better understanding and outcomes. There is also an acknowledgment of the need to improve SSCC visibility and engagement across Maryland. For this reason, the SSCC has agreed on some parameters for attendance outlined below.

Accessibility & Frequency: SSCC meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of the month, typically from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM. The default meeting location will be MDA Headquarters in Annapolis. The MASCD annual meeting (held in the summer) will replace one SSCC meeting. The SSCC annual workplan meeting requires in-person participation and is day-long.

Location: Effort will be made to have 5 out of 10 regular meetings outside of Annapolis. The SSCC will seek alternative locations across the five areas designated in state law. The SSCC will work closely with Districts and partner organizations across Maryland to coordinate these meetings. Any changes in time or location will be determined a minimum of six weeks in advance to allow reasonable accommodation and appropriate public notice.

SSCC Member Attendance: SSCC Members are expected to attend as many monthly meetings as possible. In-person attendance offers a quality of interaction that cannot be matched virtually, therefore the SSCC membership agreed to the following guidance:

- All members are expected to attend as many meetings as possible (in-person and virtual).
- In-person attendance is required to participate in the annual workplan meeting and at the MASCD annual meeting.
- For the remaining 10 meetings of the year- SSCC members are expected to attend at least 5 meetings of their choice, in person.