



FALL 2014

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Before purchasing land or beginning improvements to an existing property, plan a visit to your local soil conservation district (SCD) office. The professional staff at the local SCD office can help you understand the limitations of your property before you spend a lot of time and money. They can develop a conservation farm plan that will help you achieve your goals and work with the natural resources on your property.

KNOW YOUR SOILS

Soil surveys provide soil data and information to land owners on soil characteristics that are vital to the development and usage of the land. By reviewing the soil survey with soil conservation staff, critical topics such as soil texture, soil types, suitability for crop production, water table depth, permeability of the soil, and limitations for grading the soil can be easily understood and implemented. This information can assist you in choosing the best location for riding areas, barns, and manure storage areas, as well as pastures and hay fields. In addition, it will help you identify potential wet areas that may harbor mosquitoes and increase the risk of spreading West Nile Virus.



GET AN APPROVED SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PLAN (SCWQP)

What is a Soil and Water Conservation Plan (SCWQP)? Is a tool that helps you protect and enhance the natural resources. Unlike nutrient management plans, which deal specifically with fertilizer and manure applications, SCWQPs address a range of natural resource concerns for the entire farming operation. SCWQPs help manage farm operations, save on energy, promote productive soils, and enhance wildlife habitat and natural resources.

Am I required to have a SCWQP? Conservation plans in most counties are voluntary; however, if a landowner participates in USDA sponsored programs, an approved conservation plan may be required. Nutrient management plans are required if you have eight or more horses.

Why do I need a SCWQP plan? A properly structured and implemented plan on your farm can reduce cost/labor, increase production, and improve the aesthetics of your property. A plan may assist with compliance issues that arise with regulatory agencies and it will also streamline the development of a nutrient management plan. Protect and conserve natural resources on the farm.

What is contained in a SCWQP?

- Aerial photograph of the farm showing:
 - Property boundaries
 - Fields with land use and acres
 - Other resources such as rivers, streams, wetlands, etc.
 - Landmarks including highways, railroads, power lines, etc.
- Written plan narrative specifying:
 - Planned best management practices (BMPs) to reduce soil erosion and address water quality issues
 - Implementation schedule of planned BMPs
 - Soil map showing soil types located on the farm
 - User-friendly soil description of each soil on the farm
 - Other technical information specifically tailored for your operation

Who makes the decisions? A conservation plan is based on the needs and objectives of you, the landowner or user. Proposed BMP implementation is a combined effort between you and the soil conservation planner. Final decisions are made by you. The plan is "flexible" and may be altered by you as needs and objectives change.

FACT SHEET:

Big Dreams for Your Horse Farm? Do Your Homework First!

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PASTURE

Many factors impact the growth of grass and not all species are adapted for all climates or all soil types. Your local SCD can help you choose the best grass species and specific varieties that will adapt to your farm.

Pastures require specific management techniques to remain productive. Soils that are considered "heavy" with a lot of clay may require mechanical treatment to aerate and loosen them for improved water infiltration and drainage. Sandy soils that are loose and low in organic matter dry out quickly during hot, dry summer months and may benefit from the addition of soil amendments to improve moisture holding capability and overall soil fertility.

UNDERSTANDING AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS, ZONING, AND PERMITS

In each county, every piece of land is subject to zoning laws that determine how the land can be used and what public facilities and amenities are needed to provide service to the community. Depending on the zoning of the property some agricultural practices may require permits. Contact your local SCD office for advice and for a copy of *A Farmer's Guide to Environmental Permits*. This guide explains most federal and state permits. It does not contain information on individual county permits that may be required. Your county planning and zoning offices can provide this information. The zoning ordinance, which is part of the county code, determines the height and size of buildings, parking, and the number of units per acre that can be constructed. It also determines whether the use is agricultural, residential, industrial, or commercial. The Zoning Ordinance affects the landowner by determining how the property can be developed and used. The county government also approves changes in zoning ordinances.

Assessment is the value of the real property given by the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT). This value is used to calculate real property taxes. The assessment affects the land owner in a monetary manner. To receive and maintain the agricultural assessment from SDAT, the property must be actively used for agricultural or farm purposes.

For more information and free technical assistance contact your local soil conservation district or University of Maryland Extension Office.

	Soil Conservation	UMD
Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3	301-724-3320
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757	410-222-6755
Baltimore County	410-527-5290, ext. 3	410-771-1761
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3	410-535-3662
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3	410-479-4030
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3	410-386-2760
Catocin	301-695-2803, ext. 3	
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3	410-996-5280
Charles	301-934-9588, ext. 3	301-934-5404
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3	410-228-8800
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3	301-600-1594
Garrett	301-334-6950, ext. 3	301-334-6960
Harford	410-838-6181, ext. 3	410-638-3255
Howard	410-489-7987	410-313-2707
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3	410-778-1661
Montgomery	301-590-2855	301-590-9638
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3	301-868-9636
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3	410-758-0166
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3	301-475-4477
Somerset	410-651-1575, ext. 3	410-651-1350
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 3	410-822-1244
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3	301-791-1404
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3	410-749-6141
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3	410-632-1972



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

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Annapolis, MD 21401

410-841-5865

mda.maryland.gov

Follow MDA on Twitter @MdAgDept

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The Horse Outreach Workgroup provides information to horse owners on pasture and manure management issues. The workgroup consists of representatives from local soil conservation districts, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maryland Extension, and the Maryland Horse Industry Board. Follow the Maryland Horse Industry Board on Twitter @MdEquines. Follow the Maryland Horse Industry Board on Facebook [facebook.com/MarylandHorseIndustryBoard](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandHorseIndustryBoard) Visit the University of Maryland Extension extension.umd.edu/horses