



## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF  
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



# TEAMING UP

To Meet 2025 Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Goals



# 2019: A Year in Review

## PASSING THE REIGNS

MASCD welcomed Bruce Yerkes as its new president and thanked outgoing president Charles Rice for a job well done.

## BOBBY WILSON HONORED

Bobby Wilson of Queen Anne's County received MASCD's Outstanding Leadership Award for his many years of outstanding service to the conservation community.

## CARROLL AND HARFORD TURN 75

The Carroll and Harford soil conservation districts celebrated 75 years of helping landowners care for natural resources.

## SOIL HEALTH MOVES FORWARD

Lindsay Thompson represented MASCD on Maryland's new 32-member Soil Health Advisory Committee. The committee is charged with finding ways to help farmers adopt practices that promote soil health.

## MARYLAND FARM AND HARVEST RETURNS FOR SEASON 7

Maryland Public Television's popular original series, Maryland Farm & Harvest, returned for a seventh season to take viewers around the state to experience what it's like to run a 21st century farm.

## MARYLAND GETS NEW SOIL HEALTH CHAMP

Dr. Charles Mess, of Brooke Grove Farm in Montgomery County, became Maryland's newest Soil Health Champion. Learn how Dr. Mess improved soil health in his pastures and meet Maryland's other soil health champs. Visit: [nacdn.net/soil-champs/northeast/](http://nacdn.net/soil-champs/northeast/)

## JENELL ECK JOINS MASCD

MASCD welcomed Jenell Eck as its new Programs & Public Relations Director.

## RIGDONS HONORED

Meet the Rigdon Family of Jarrettsville, MASCD's 2019 Cooperator of the Year. Founded in 1728, Rigdon Farms has been a popular fixture in Harford County for as long as anyone can remember, selling seasonal produce directly to customers at its iconic red barn produce stand. Today, the 11th generation family farm is run by John, Andrea, and Harris Rigdon. Together they raise 200 grass-fed beef cattle along with corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, hay, and straw on 2,000 acres spanning three counties.

The Rigdons have worked with the Harford Soil Conservation District for many years to install practices that protect their farm's natural resources. They plant cover crops in the fall to protect water quality, keep their herd of beef cattle fenced out of the stream, practice no-till farming to build their soil's health, and have embraced new technologies such as Precision Agriculture to improve the way they manage nutrient applications.

Other BMPs installed by the Rigdons include an agri-chemical handling facility, grassed waterways, and a rotational grazing system for their cattle. In 2015, they initiated one of the first large scale stream restoration projects in the county along North Stirrup Run, a tributary to Deer Creek.

The Rigdons are passionate about caring for their animals and the natural resources on their farms. MASCD is proud to honor them as its 2019 Cooperator of the Year.





# Teamwork makes the difference.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was a great honor to begin my term as president of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts in 2019. Soil conservation districts have a long history of working with farmers to protect the soil and water. In fact, we may be the most important conservation group that people outside of farming have never heard of. Nonetheless, **our roots date back to the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s** when severe drought combined with poor farming practices led to massive dust storms that robbed the nation's heartland of its topsoil. Districts were established by federal law to serve as the first line of defense against the disaster, and immediately set about the task of helping farmers care for the soil and water. We've been at it ever since.

Given our long history, it is no surprise that Bay leaders turned to districts for guidance in developing the agricultural component of Maryland's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay. During the year, districts performed detailed assessments of best management practices that could be realistically installed on Maryland farms under the direction and guidance of our technical staff. The results showed that **Maryland agriculture can meet its 2025 nutrient and sediment reduction goals.**

Our technical staff are the unsung action heroes of the Bay cleanup. These are the planners, technicians, and engineers who install conservation practices on farms in partnership with our farmer cooperators. They meet with farmers and walk their fields and pastures before sitting down to develop realistic management and construction solutions to protect against nutrient and sediment losses. **Staff work closely with farmers every step of the way, helping them design, plan, and apply for grants** that can mean the difference between installing a conservation practice or placing it on hold.

Please read on to learn more about how districts are teaming up with farmers to meet Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals. We thank our elected officials for their past support and urge their continued support of our boots on the ground approach to meeting Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals. After all, it takes a team.

**Bruce Yerkes, *President***

**Lindsay Thompson, *Executive Director***

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF  
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

## OUR PRIORITIES

- **Develop Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans for farmers.** These plans provide farmers with a game plan for protecting natural resources on their farms.
- **Provide farmers with free technical assistance to design, construct, and maintain best management practices on their farms.**
- **Secure financial assistance to help farmers cover the cost of installing conservation practices on their farms.**
- **Review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for local governments.**



# Teaming Up for the Chesapeake Bay

Technical staff working in Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts help farmers plan, design, and install best management practices on their farms to control soil erosion and manage nutrients. In addition to protecting natural resources, their work helps Maryland meet water quality targets outlined in its federally approved plan to restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025. Initiated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2010, the Bay restoration is a watershed-wide effort that requires the six Bay states and the District of Columbia to reduce pollution by sufficient levels to meet water quality standards by 2025.

## Status of the Cleanup

An EPA assessment of Maryland's cleanup progress through June 2018 showed that the state continues to meet its phosphorus and sediment reduction goals, but that additional focus is needed to reduce nitrogen levels in the Bay.

Based on that assessment, Maryland submitted its third and final Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to EPA for approval in April 2019. Developed with substantial public input, the Phase III WIP builds on previous water quality accomplishments and outlines additional steps Maryland will take to achieve all pollution reduction goals for the Bay by 2025. Progress in meeting the new Phase III strategies will be reported in 2020.



## Tools for Success

Agricultural programs and practices that are making a difference for the Bay:

- Cost-Share Funding for best management practices
- Budget Support for soil conservation district technical staff
- Cover Crops
- Streamside Buffers
- Livestock and Poultry Waste Storage Structures
- Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans
- New Technologies
- Nutrient Management/Phosphorus Management Tool

## On the Farm

### Teaming Up to Develop Farm Plans

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans—also known as farm plans—are at the heart of Maryland's agricultural conservation efforts. These plans—developed free of charge to the farmer by soil conservation district technical staff—provide a roadmap to make environmental improvements on farms.

It takes a team of conservation professionals to develop an effective farm plan. A typical plan includes land use maps, soils information, an inventory of natural resources, engineering notes, and other supporting information. Because every farm is unique, no two farm plans are the same. Each plan outlines farm-specific best management practices that can





be installed to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect water quality. District staff update farm plans if major changes are made to the operation or at a minimum, every ten years.

Due to their importance in protecting water quality, farm plans are required by many federal and state programs and are included in Maryland's Bay cleanup plan. In 2019, technical staff working in Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts developed or updated 1,175 Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans for farmers.

### Teaming Up to Install Best Management Practices

A large part of the work being performed by district technical staff takes place on the crop fields and pastures of Maryland's farm county. District staff help farmers select the right BMPs for their farms, supervise their installation or construction, and develop maintenance plans to keep them in good working order. In 2019, soil conservation district technical staff helped farmers install 2,039 best management practices on their farms to protect natural resources.

### Teaming Up to Secure Conservation Assistance for Farmers

Every year, Maryland's soil conservation districts help farmers apply for local, state, and federal assistance programs to help offset the cost of installing conservation practices on their farms. In 2019, districts helped farmers secure \$39.7 million in conservation assistance from these organizations:

#### MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

##### Cover Crop Program:

\$17 MILLION—362,976 ACRES

Provided 1,283 farmers with cost-share grants to help offset seed, labor and equipment costs associated with planting cover crops.



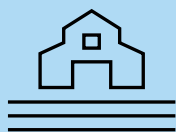
## BY THE NUMBERS

In 2019, Maryland's soil conservation districts helped farmers install conservation practices on the land to protect water quality in the streams and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay.



# 1,175

**SOIL CONSERVATION & WATER QUALITY PLANS**  
Developed or updated 1,175 soil conservation and water quality plans to protect 137,372 acres of land in every Maryland county.



# 2,039

**BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**  
Managed the construction or installation of 2,039 best management practices for 932 cooperators to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect water quality in the streams and rivers that flow to the Bay.

**Capital Program/Special Project Grants:** \$4.9 MILLION—6,414 ACRES  
Provided 192 farmers with cost-share grants to install a variety of BMPs on their farms to protect natural resources.

**Manure Transport Grants:**  
\$1.07 MILLION—249,840 TONS OF MANURE TRANSPORTED  
Provided cost-share grants to transport manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels. (*Poultry companies provided an additional \$373,875 in matching funds to transport poultry litter.*)

**Manure Injection Grants:** \$338,447  
Provided 53 farmers with grants to help offset costs to hire custom applicators or rent special equipment to inject manure below the soil surface.

#### USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE\*

##### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

\$11.9 MILLION—14,000 ACRES  
Provided financial and technical assistance to help farmers address natural resource concerns.

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program:**

\$2.1 MILLION—12,038 ACRES

Provided financial and technical assistance to farmers to participate in partner-driven conservation projects.

**Conservation Stewardship Program:**

\$1.5 MILLION—11,500 ACRES

Helped farmers maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns.

**Agricultural Conservation Easement Program:**

\$4 MILLION—212 ACRES

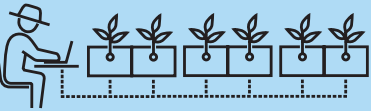
Provided financial and technical as-

sistance to help farmers protect and enhance wetlands.

**Agricultural Management Assistance Program:**

\$2 MILLION—114 ACRES

Provided financial and technical assis-



**\$39.7 MILLION**

**GRANTS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Secured \$39.7 million in financial assistance from state and federal agencies to help farmers install best management practices on their farms to protect natural resources.

tance to help farmers address water quality management and erosion control.

*\*USDA-NRCS data is preliminary and subject to change.*



MASCD IS A PROUD SPONSOR OF MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION'S NUMBER ONE LOCALLY PRODUCED SHOW, MARYLAND FARM & HARVEST. NOW IN ITS SEVENTH SEASON, THE SHOW TAKES VIEWERS AROUND THE STATE TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO RUN A 21ST CENTURY FARM. WATCH ONLINE AT [MPT.ORG/FARM](http://MPT.ORG/FARM).



## SPECIAL PROJECT GRANTS

Special project grants secured during the year provide farmers with needed engineering services, continued support for MASCD's longstanding farmer recognition and certification program, and opportunities for farmers to adopt practices that support soil health.

**PROJECT NAME:** ACCELERATING ENGINEERING DESIGNS FOR MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

**FUNDING SOURCE:** USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AMOUNT:** \$146,015

**DESCRIPTION:** Recognizing the need for additional engineering services to get conservation practices on the ground, MASCD applied for funds to hire contract engineers to design practices to be implemented by district technical staff.

**PROJECT NAME:** FARM STEWARDSHIP CERTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

**FUNDING SOURCE:** Keith Campbell Foundation

**AMOUNT:** \$40,000

**DESCRIPTION:** This grant provides continued support for MASCD's Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP). Established in 2010, FSCAP recognizes farmers who are good stewards of their natural resources and encourages and rewards farmers to put more best management practices on their land. Since its establishment, 153 farmers have been certified as agricultural conservation stewards.

**PROJECT NAME:** PROMOTING HEALTHY SOILS

**FUNDING SOURCE:** National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

**AMOUNT:** \$1 million

**DESCRIPTION:** MASCD is a project partner for this three-year grant secured by the Maryland Department of Agriculture that supports the development of a comprehensive program to help farmers adopt soil health practices that benefit their farms and the streams and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay.

# In Our Towns and Cities

## Teaming Up to Control Urban Runoff

### EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL PLAN REVIEWS

Construction and road building activities in our towns and cities can contribute to erosion, sedimentation, and flooding in the streams and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay. Every time we clear the land, we increase the potential for sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants to enter our waterways.

Since 1972, soil conservation districts have been authorized to review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for construction and land development projects in their counties. Reviews are performed by urban planners who work with builders, engineers, and zoning officials to make certain that protections are in place to minimize soil erosion and nutrient runoff. In 2019, soil conservation districts reviewed 5,222 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects. Just over 3,100 of these plans impacting 20,228 acres were approved.

**A STORMWATER MANAGEMENT POND WORKS AS A SEDIMENT BASIN TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE OF A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN WASHINGTON COUNTY.**



## URBAN COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Soil conservation districts in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Frederick, St. Mary's, and Washington counties perform compliance activities for the Maryland Department of the Environment's Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program. Developers appreciate the easy access to enforcement officials that local oversight provides, resulting in faster project turnaround times. In 2019, participating districts performed 231 pre-construction meetings and 258 inspections to ensure that erosion and sediment control measures are working to protect water quality.

## Teaming Up to Educate

Educating farmers, homeowners, and students on best management practices that promote clean water, healthy soil, and productive food systems is a big part of what we do.

### FARMER OUTREACH

Every year, districts sponsor workshops, pasture walks, field days, and demonstration projects to educate farmers about new equipment, innovative technologies and the latest research on soil health, precision



**STUDENTS FROM CALVERT HIGH SCHOOL IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND WON THIS YEAR'S ENVIROTHON COMPETITION.**

agriculture, and pasture management. Our education programs allow farmers to learn about new ideas, equipment, and technologies—such as precision agriculture—directly from other farmers.

## CITIZEN AND YOUTH OUTREACH

Districts host tree and plant sales for homeowners, provide guidance on ways to follow Maryland's Lawn Fertilizer Law, and offer backyard gardening tips that can make a difference for the Chesapeake Bay. They also provide programs that help local school districts comply with environmental education mandates. In 2019, district staff responded to dozens of requests for classroom visits, career workshops, farm tours, and demonstrations at environmental education centers.

## MARYLAND ENVIROTHON

A highlight of our outreach efforts is the Maryland Envirothon, an outdoor natural resources competition for high school teens that tests their knowledge of Maryland's natural resources and challenges them to develop solutions to a range of current environmental issues. Teens compete at the local, state, and national levels. In 2019, a five-member team of students from Calvert County won the 29th annual Maryland Envirothon and went on to place tenth out of 53 teams at the 2019 National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon held at North Carolina State University.





## ABOUT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Long before the term environmentalist was coined, Maryland's soil conservation districts were working with landowners to protect natural resources on their farms. Established over 75 years ago following the ecological disaster brought on by the Dust Bowl, districts perform a range of conservation activities aimed at keeping the soil healthy and our waterways clear and clean.

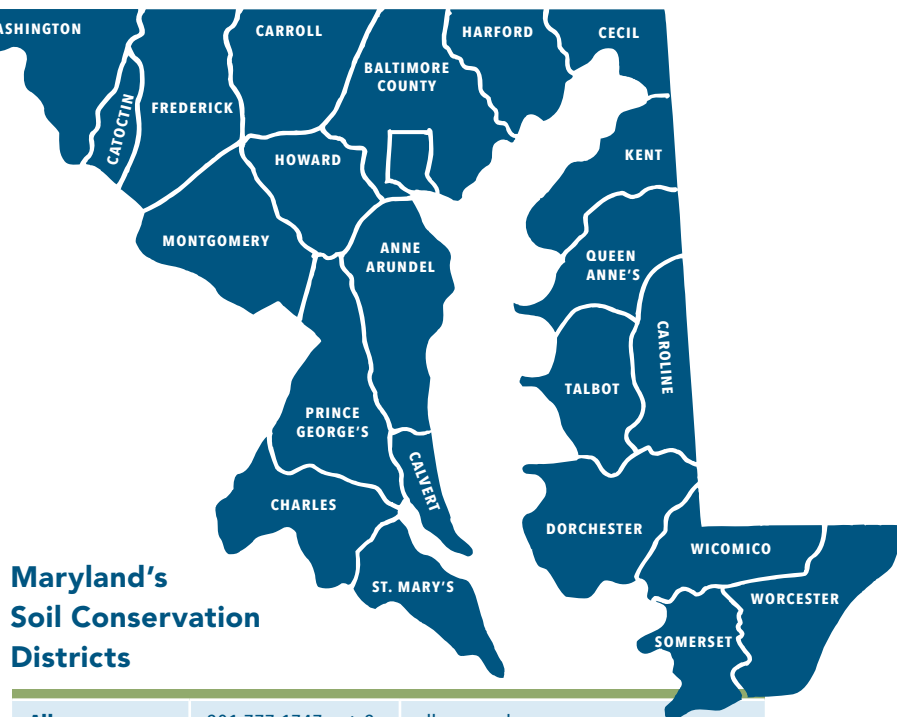
Here in Maryland, more than 120 volunteers serve in appointed positions on the governing boards of soil conservation districts. They work directly with thousands of cooperating land managers across the state, and their efforts impact almost two million acres of private land. The staff of a typical soil conservation district office includes a district manager, district conservationist, engineers, agricultural planners, technicians, soil scientist, urban reviewers, and administrative staff. Staff and operating budgets are funded through a combination of federal, state, and local sources as well as grants.

Soil conservation districts carry out many federal and state mandates at the local level and serve as the agricultural representative on local, regional, and statewide environmental task forces and committees charged with protecting natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay.

## MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Soil conservation districts are members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership, a coalition of federal, state, and local agriculture agencies dedicated to protecting and conserving natural resources and promoting Maryland agriculture.

- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- State Soil Conservation Committee
- University of Maryland Extension



## Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts

<b>Allegany</b>	301-777-1747, ext. 3	<a href="http://alleganyscd.com">alleganyscd.com</a>
<b>Anne Arundel</b>	410-571-6757	<a href="http://aascd.org">aascd.org</a>
<b>Baltimore Co.</b>	410-527-5920, ext. 3	<a href="http://bcscd.org">bcscd.org</a>
<b>Calvert</b>	410-535-1521, ext. 3	<a href="http://calvertsoil.org">calvertsoil.org</a>
<b>Caroline</b>	410-479-1202, ext. 3	
<b>Carroll</b>	410-848-8200, ext. 3	<a href="http://carrollsoil.com">carrollsoil.com</a>
<b>Catoctin</b>	301-695-2803, ext. 3	<a href="http://catoctinfredericksd.com">catoctinfredericksd.com</a>
<b>Cecil</b>	410-398-4411, ext. 3	<a href="http://cecilsd.com">cecilsd.com</a>
<b>Charles</b>	301-638-3028	<a href="http://charlesscd.com">charlesscd.com</a>
<b>Dorchester</b>	410-228-5640, ext. 3	
<b>Frederick</b>	301-695-2803, ext. 3	<a href="http://catoctinfredericksd.com">catoctinfredericksd.com</a>
<b>Garrett</b>	301-501-5856, ext. 3	<a href="http://garrettscd.org">garrettscd.org</a>
<b>Harford</b>	410-638-4828	<a href="http://harfordscd.org">harfordscd.org</a>
<b>Howard</b>	410-313-0680	<a href="http://howardscd.org">howardscd.org</a>
<b>Kent</b>	410-778-5150, ext. 3	<a href="http://kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org">kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org</a>
<b>Montgomery</b>	301-590-2855	<a href="http://montgomeryscd.org">montgomeryscd.org</a>
<b>Prince George's</b>	301-574-5162, ext. 3	<a href="http://pgscd.org">pgscd.org</a>
<b>Queen Anne's</b>	410-758-3136, ext. 3	<a href="http://qascd.com">qascd.com</a>
<b>St. Mary's</b>	301-475-8402, ext. 3	<a href="http://stmarysscd.com">stmarysscd.com</a>
<b>Somerset</b>	410-621-9310	
<b>Talbot</b>	410-822-1577, ext. 5	<a href="http://talbotscd.com">talbotscd.com</a>
<b>Washington Co.</b>	301-797-6821, ext. 3	<a href="http://conservationplace.com">conservationplace.com</a>
<b>Wicomico</b>	410-546-4777, ext. 3	
<b>Worcester</b>	410-632-5439, ext. 3	



## MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

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