



CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

A
BIG
Year for
Cover Crops

HELPING FARMERS FINANCE SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION
PRACTICES FOR A HEALTHIER CHESAPEAKE BAY

FISCAL YEAR 2024 INVESTMENTS IN CONSERVATION



\$30M

Maryland Cover Crop and Cover Crop Plus Grants
450,000 Acres Planted



\$7M

Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program
296 Projects Installed



\$1.9M

Manure Transport Grants
363,865 Tons of Manure Transported



\$496K

Manure Injection Grants
67 Projects Funded




\$457K

Conservation Buffer Initiative
26 Projects Funded



\$443K

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
36 Projects Funded



\$270K

Low Interest Loans
2 Projects Funded



\$264K

Bonus Payments for CREP Enrollment/Reenrollment
2,396 Acres



\$33K

Small Farm and Urban Agriculture
26 Projects Funded



MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ATTICKS

For nearly four decades, our Conservation Grants Program has been the go-to resource for Maryland farmers working to safeguard the natural resources that support healthy food and a healthy Chesapeake Bay.

Over the years, we've introduced a range of innovative, science-driven conservation practices that have positively impacted the Bay. More recently, farmers have embraced conservation practices that protect water quality and enhance soil health while building resilience to climate change. It's rewarding to see these practices making a real difference for our farmers.

Take cover crops, for example. During the 2023-24 planting season, Maryland farmers used our grants to plant nearly 450,000 acres of fall cover crops to protect local water quality, improve their soil for spring crops, and protect fields from extreme weather events. This was our largest cover crop planting in recent years and aligns with our Chesapeake Bay milestone goals.

Established in 1984, the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program (MACS) remains a trusted financial resource for farmers. Over the past year, MACS provided more than \$7 million in grants to support nearly 300 conservation projects that control erosion, manage manure resources, and protect local water quality. These projects contribute to several Bay milestone goals, including the construction of animal

waste storage structures, livestock exclusion fencing, and stream buffers.

Participation in both the federal/state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and our Conservation Buffer Initiative remained strong this year. These programs offer farmers attractive incentive payments to plant riparian forest buffers and install other practices on marginal farmland to improve the health of local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. They are helping Maryland meet its commitment to plant 5 million trees by 2031.

Our Manure Transport Program also had another standout year as it continues to help livestock and poultry farmers comply with Maryland's phosphorus management regulations.

Additionally, our Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Program is gaining momentum with small-scale growers across the state as it promotes conservation practices that support healthy, community-grown food.

Overall, it's been a big year for cover crops and conservation programs. Please read our full report for more details.

Kevin Atticks, D.C.D.
Maryland Agriculture Secretary

CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRESS

Maryland farmers use our grants to install highly valued best management practices (BMPs) outlined in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay restoration plan.

In Fiscal Year 2024, Maryland farmers who received our grants invested \$125,000 of their own money into projects that will prevent an estimated 3.2 million pounds of nitrogen, 32,031 pounds of phosphorus, and 15,208 tons of soil from entering Maryland waterways. Free conservation planning and assistance is provided by the state’s 23 soil conservation districts with technical guidance from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The chart shows MDA grant-supported practices that help Maryland meet its Bay nutrient and sediment reduction targets. Most of agriculture’s milestones are either complete or close to completion, with Off-Stream Watering vastly exceeding its milestone goal.



CHESAPEAKE BAY CLEAN-UP PROGRESS THROUGH JULY 2024*

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE	2025 GOAL (2024-2025 MILESTONE)	2024 PROGRESS	PERCENT TOWARDS MILESTONE
Cover Crops (MD Cover Crop and Cover Crop Plus Programs)	478,391 acres	449,981 acres	94%
Manure Transport (wet tons) Alternative Use or Out of Watershed	97,366 tons	63,140 tons	65%
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE	2025 GOAL (2024-2025 MILESTONE)	2024 PROGRESS	PERCENT TOWARDS MILESTONE
Exclusion Fencing (acres of buffers)	1,867 acres	1,389 acres	74%
Grass Buffers	43,706 acres	35,412 acres	81%
Off-Stream Watering Without Fencing	12,730 acres	46,278 acres	364%
Retirement of Highly Erodible Land	33,171 acres	32,087 acres	97%
Streamside Forest Buffers	20,274 acres	21,559 acres	106%
Waste Storage Structures (livestock)**	99,654 animal units	95,532 animal units	96%
Waste Storage Structures (poultry)**	1,616,618 animal units	1,601,071 animal units	99%
Wetland Restoration	13,620 acres	13,795 acres	101%

*In some instances, progress includes practices installed with funds from both MDA and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**One animal unit = 1,000 lbs. of live animal weight

FISCAL YEAR 2024 FUNDING SUMMARY

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Conservation Grants Program provided Maryland farmers over \$40.2 million in cost-share grants to install 2,484 conservation projects on their farms. These projects help farmers control soil erosion and reduce nutrient runoff while providing water quality, soil health, climate, and economic benefits.

Our grants cover up to 100% of eligible costs for more than 40 best management practices (BMPs). This program is funded by general obligation bonds, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

Importantly, our grants support highly valued best management practices (BMPs) outlined in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay restoration plan. Cover crops planted after the harvest to recycle unused nutrients, streamside buffers of trees and grasses planted to protect local streams from farm runoff, and animal waste management systems constructed to help farmers safely handle and store manure resources are among the highly valued conservation practices we finance.

CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM SUMMARY FISCAL YEAR 2024		
CONSERVATION PROGRAM	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	FUNDS
Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program (MACS)		
Total Approved from State Funds	327	\$ 9,348,184
Completed Projects		
CREP Projects with State Funds	36	\$ 443,692
All Other Projects with State Funds	226	\$ 5,805,937
With Federal Funds	34	\$ 790,773
Total Capital Projects Completed	296	\$ 7,040,402
Maryland Cover Crop Program		
Traditional Cover Crop Program	1,319	\$29,613,060
Cover Crop Plus Program	16	\$ 435,967
Total	1,335	\$30,049,027
Manure Management Program		
Manure Transport ¹	472	\$ 1,924,681
Manure Injection	67	\$ 496,375
Total	539	\$ 2,421,056
Ecosystem Incentives Program		
CREP Incentive Payments	262	\$ 264,531
Conservation Buffer Initiative	26	\$ 457,248
Total	288	\$ 721,779
Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Program		
Small Acreage Cover Crop Program	25	\$ 20,323
Water and Power Infrastructure Program	1	\$ 13,143
Total	26	\$ 33,466
Total Projects Completed	2,484	\$40,265,730
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	NITROGEN	PHOSPHORUS
Estimated Pounds of Nutrients Removed by Capital Projects	132,731	28,458
Estimated Pounds of Nutrients Removed by Cover Crops	3,081,813	3,573
Total	3,214,544	32,031
	TONS OF SOIL	ACRES OF LAND
Tons of Soil Saved Per Year ²	15,208	2,946
MANURE MANAGED DAILY WITH ANIMAL WASTE STORAGE STRUCTURES	TONS OF MANURE	ANIMAL UNITS³
Poultry Manure Managed Daily	44	3,787
Dairy Manure Managed Daily	107	2,109
Beef Manure Managed Daily	160	3,953
Other Animal Manure Managed Daily	25	261
Total	336	10,110
¹ Does not include poultry company matching funds (\$671,468)		
² Based on the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE)		
³ One animal unit = 1,000 lbs. of live animal weight		
Note: Nutrient reduction figures are based on the best information available and are consistent with the latest Chesapeake Bay Model.		



Concrete pads and vegetative buffers help protect water and air quality at this locally owned poultry farm on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE (MACS) PROGRAM

Established in 1984, the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program is our oldest conservation grant program. Over the years, MACS has helped thousands of Maryland farmers install a wide range of best management practices (BMPs) on their farms to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and safeguard water quality in local streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. Today, MACS funds 40 types of BMPs, with up to 100% cost-share available for certain high-priority conservation practices.

In Fiscal Year 2024, MACS provided Maryland farmers with just over \$7 million in cost-share grants to install 296 conservation projects on their farms. The top five practices installed during the year include **92 grassed waterways** to control erosion, **52 lined waterways or outlets** to protect areas that cannot be stabilized by permanent vegetation, **49 fencing projects** to protect local streams from animal impacts and improve the management of pastures through rotational grazing, **48 heavy use projects** to stabilize areas frequently used by animals or farm equipment, and **47 underground outlets** that support conservation drainage practices. Please see the center spread for a complete list of best management practices installed using MACS funds in Fiscal Year 2024.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUMMARY FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS FISCAL YEAR 2024		
DISTRICT	COMPLETED PROJECTS	MACS PAYMENT
Allegany	1	\$ 4,010
Anne Arundel	1	\$ 27,468
Baltimore County	14	\$ 485,572
Calvert	4	\$ 192,517
Caroline	7	\$ 286,476
Carroll	59	\$1,461,561
Catoctin	4	\$ 246,013
Cecil	17	\$ 491,671
Charles	0	\$ -
Dorchester	3	\$ 72,664
Frederick	20	\$ 725,137
Garrett	7	\$ 150,643
Harford	14	\$ 138,548
Howard	10	\$ 284,900
Kent	38	\$ 793,174
Montgomery	19	\$ 63,972
Prince George's	2	\$ 84,898
Queen Anne's	43	\$ 654,586
Somerset	1	\$ 23,885
St. Mary's	3	\$ 94,177
Talbot	12	\$ 211,659
Washington County	12	\$ 404,334
Wicomico	4	\$ 86,537
Worcester	1	\$ 56,000
Total	296	\$7,040,402



Completed MACS Cost-Shared Practices by Soil Conservation District

PRACTICE	Soil Conservation Districts												
	ALLEGANY	ANNE ARUNDEL	BALTIMORE COUNTY	CALVERT	CAROLINE	CARROLL	CATOCTIN	CECIL	CHARLES	DORCHESTER	FREDERICK	GARRETT	
Animal Mortality Facility													
Conservation Cover						2		1					
Contour Farming													
Contour Orchard													
Critical Area Planting				3	1			5			8		
Denitrifying Bioreactor													
Diversion					1	1							
Fence	1	1	8			12	2	3			3	4	
Field Border													
Filter Strip													
Grade Stabilization Structure					1			1					
Grassed Waterway			4	4	1	21		10			5		
Heavy Use Area Protection			3		1	15	3	1		2	6	3	
Hedgerow Planting													
Lined Waterway or Outlet				2	2	10		9			5		
Pasture & Hay Planting			1			1							
Riparian Forest Buffer						5					1		
Riparian Herbaceous Cover						1							
Roof Runoff Structure			3			11	2	1			2		
Roofs and Covers			2			8	2				3	1	
Saturated Buffer													
Sediment Basin													
Sediment Control Pond													
Spring Development			1			5					1	2	
Stream Crossing							1	1			3		
Strip Cropping, Contour													
Strip Cropping, Field													
Structure for Water Control					4			1					
Subsurface Drain			1	2	4	16		2			6	1	
Terrace System													
Tree/Shrub Establishment											1		
Underground Outlet					4	22	1	3			8	1	
Vegetated Treatment Area													
Waste Storage Facility			1			3	2	2			1	1	
Waste Treatment Lagoon													
Waste Treatment Strip													
Water Well						1					1		
Watering Facility			1			4	1	1			5	3	
Wetland Creation								1					
Wetland Restoration					1					1			
Grand Total	1	1	25	11	20	138	14	42	0	3	59	16	

ct | Fiscal Year 2024

	HARFORD	HOWARD	KENT	MONTGOMERY	PRINCE GEORGE'S	QUEEN ANNE'S	ST. MARY'S	SOMERSET	TALBOT	WASHINGTON COUNTY	WICOMICO	WORCESTER	TOTAL FY24	TOTAL FY84-24	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
			7		1					1		1	1,060	1,061	
												11	738	749	
												0	47	47	
												0	2	2	
	3	6	1	1		2		4				34	981	1,015	
												0	2	2	
	1		2		1	1						7	568	575	
	4	2		1	3				5			49	1,488	1,537	
			1	18	3							22	15	37	
												0	23	23	
			4		7	2		1				16	2,008	2,024	
	5	4	21		7			10				92	5,541	5,633	
	3	3		1					3	3	1	48	1,270	1,318	
												0	1	1	
	5	4	1	1	5			8				52	628	680	
									1			3	19	22	
												6	1,597	1,603	
			2		7							10	241	251	
		1							1			21	875	896	
		1							2			19	72	91	
												0	1	1	
												0	51	51	
		3	1	1								5	1,123	1,128	
									2			11	1,215	1,226	
												5	562	567	
												0	61	61	
												0	72	72	
	2				6							13	56	69	
	1				6			1	1			41	61	102	
												0	92	92	
			2									3	3	6	
	1	1			6							47	61	108	
												0	1,693	1,693	
		1							1			12	2,430	2,442	
												0	15	15	
												0	45	45	
		1										3	210	213	
	2	1		1	2			1	5			27	2,216	2,243	
												1	1	2	
			5		7		1					15	77	92	
	27	28	47	19	5	61	5	1	25	21	4	1	574	27,221	27,795

MARYLAND COVER CROP PROGRAM

This program offers grants to farmers who plant cereal grains, legumes, and other types of cold-hardy cover crops in newly harvested fields. These fall-planted cover crops are not intended for profit, but instead promote water quality, enhance soil health, and provide climate benefits. They capture and recycle unused nutrients from previous summer crops, prevent erosion, enrich the soil with organic matter, sequester carbon dioxide, and protect against extreme weather conditions like drought and flooding.

MDA grants help cover seed, labor, and equipment costs to plant fall cover crops. During the 2023-2024 planting season, Maryland farmers planted 446,640 acres of cover crops using \$29.6 million in MDA cost-share grants. Funding for the Cover Crop Program is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

2023-2024 COVER CROP PROGRAM			
COUNTY	CONTRACTS	SPRING CERTIFIED ACRES	PAYMENT
Allegany	3	132	\$ 10,721
Anne Arundel	16	3,182	\$ 288,427
Baltimore County	28	9,981	\$ 650,978
Calvert	9	1,764	\$ 98,964
Caroline	106	31,189	\$ 2,102,014
Carroll	102	28,950	\$ 2,064,767
Cecil	82	21,096	\$ 1,421,062
Charles	26	5,253	\$ 334,822
Dorchester	84	32,052	\$ 1,858,793
Frederick & Catocctin	154	35,807	\$ 2,395,412
Garrett	18	1,126	\$ 95,911
Harford	59	14,438	\$ 1,109,679
Howard	12	2,929	\$ 260,928
Kent	98	58,435	\$ 3,919,910
Montgomery	24	12,180	\$ 588,677
Prince George's	10	2,591	\$ 208,163
Queen Anne's	121	57,198	\$ 3,786,373
St Mary's	48	7,300	\$ 388,391
Somerset	39	12,101	\$ 769,474
Talbot	77	37,142	\$ 2,241,625
Washington County	64	12,934	\$ 884,013
Wicomico	72	24,121	\$ 1,662,637
Worcester	67	34,739	\$ 2,471,325
Total	1,319	446,640	\$29,613,060



The 2023-2024 cover crop planting was our largest in recent years.



Healthy streams need trees. CREP projects helped Maryland exceed its 2024-2025 Bay milestone goal.

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

Protecting and enhancing the health of local waterways is key to the success of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. Maryland’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is a federal-state partnership program that pays farmers and landowners annual rental payments to take environmentally sensitive cropland near streams out of production for 10 to 15 years and install conservation practices that protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

Participating farmers and landowners receive free technical assistance and attractive financial incentives to plant streamside buffers of trees, shrubs, and grasses, establish wetlands, protect highly erodible lands, or create wildlife habitat. Now in its 27th year, Maryland CREP was the first program of its kind in the nation.

Cost-share assistance is provided through MACS to install streamside exclusion fencing, livestock crossings, watering systems, and

other best management practices on enrolled lands. Landowners can also sell a permanent easement on their land to the State of Maryland.

CREP forest buffers are a key feature in Maryland’s initiative to plant 5 million trees by 2031 to capture carbon from the atmosphere and provide environmental and human health benefits. In Fiscal Year 2024, MACS provided landowners \$443,692 in grants to install 36 CREP-related projects.

CREP PROJECTS COMPLETED BY DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2024		
DISTRICT	COMPLETED PROJECTS	MACS PAYMENT
Caroline	1	\$ 15,896
Carroll	11	\$ 91,522
Cecil	1	\$ 15,016
Dorchester	1	\$ 16,492
Frederick County	1	\$ 36,832
Kent	12	\$221,061
Queen Anne's	8	\$ 22,988
Somerset	1	\$ 23,885
Total	36	\$443,692



MANURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Managing manure resources responsibly benefits water quality, soil health, and crop productivity. This program helps farmers comply with Maryland's nutrient management regulations and take advantage of innovative technology to conserve nutrients and reduce pollution when spreading manure on crop fields.

Manure Transport Grants

Authorized by the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998, cost-share grants are offered to haul poultry, dairy, beef, and other livestock manure away from farms with high soil phosphorus levels. Farmers or businesses receiving the manure must have acceptable soil phosphorus levels and a current


nutrient management plan to qualify for reimbursement. In Fiscal Year 2024, Maryland farmers received \$1,924,681 in grants to transport 363,865 tons of manure to approved farms and businesses. Delmarva poultry companies contributed \$671,468 in matching funds to transport poultry manure.

Livestock manure (dairy, beef, equine, and swine) comprised 73% of the manure transported. Dairy farmers mainly use our grants to haul manure away from the barnyard area to distant fields with acceptable phosphorus levels. If soil phosphorus levels are elevated in distant fields, the manure is hauled to other farms. Poultry litter comprised the remaining 27% of the manure transported during the year. Of that amount, 57% was

trucked to alternative use facilities, with the remaining 43% land applied to crops as a fertilizer on qualifying fields.

Manure Injection Grants

Cost-share grants of up to \$45 an acre are available to help farmers hire custom operators or rent or lease specialized equipment to inject liquid manure below the soil surface. The practice helps prevent nutrient runoff, reduces odors and greenhouse gas emissions, and preserves beneficial surface residue. In Fiscal Year 2024, 67 contracts totaling \$496,375 in cost-share grants were awarded to offset operating costs associated with this practice.

A green tractor is pulling a white manure transport trailer in a field. The trailer is loaded with a large pile of brown manure. The tractor is moving from left to right across the frame. The background shows a clear blue sky and a line of trees in the distance. The foreground is a grassy field with some bare tree branches in the upper left corner.

Maryland farms transported 363,865 tons of manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels to alternative use facilities and qualifying farms.

MANURE TRANSPORT PROGRAM PAYMENT SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR	ACTUAL TONS TRANSPORTED	MACS PAYMENT	POULTRY COMPANIES COST-SHARE PAYMENT*	TOTAL FUNDS ISSUED
FY2001	20,477	\$ 195,559	\$ 195,559	\$ 391,118
FY2002	47,481	\$ 434,610	\$ 420,395	\$ 855,005
FY2003	28,556	\$ 233,444	\$ 229,645	\$ 463,089
FY2004	40,755	\$ 295,356	\$ 285,806	\$ 581,162
FY2005	36,329	\$ 239,196	\$ 200,113	\$ 439,309
FY2006	69,009	\$ 380,694	\$ 293,728	\$ 674,422
FY2007	99,297	\$ 490,011	\$ 356,955	\$ 846,966
FY2008	99,817	\$ 520,357	\$ 370,985	\$ 891,342
FY2009	119,892	\$ 663,177	\$ 504,024	\$ 1,167,201
FY2010	80,899	\$ 469,398	\$ 402,846	\$ 872,244
FY2011	61,150	\$ 354,011	\$ 294,383	\$ 648,394
FY2012	35,554	\$ 297,587	\$ 283,951	\$ 581,538
FY2013	52,481	\$ 377,007	\$ 339,252	\$ 716,259
FY2014	118,995	\$ 608,259	\$ 419,929	\$ 1,028,188
FY2015	167,237	\$ 851,304	\$ 409,548	\$ 1,260,852
FY2016	213,151	\$ 954,300	\$ 447,882	\$ 1,402,182
FY2017	241,941	\$ 1,174,690	\$ 453,038	\$ 1,627,728
FY2018	249,421	\$ 1,020,910	\$ 453,876	\$ 1,474,786
FY2019	249,840	\$ 1,074,079	\$ 373,875	\$ 1,447,954
FY2020	309,374	\$ 1,382,822	\$ 455,681	\$ 1,838,503
FY2021	377,215	\$ 1,889,179	\$ 602,791	\$ 2,491,970
FY2022	402,926	\$ 2,580,681	\$ 682,431	\$ 3,263,112
FY2023	358,840	\$ 2,046,206	\$ 682,500	\$ 2,728,706
FY2024	363,865	\$ 1,924,681	\$ 671,468	\$ 2,596,149
Totals	3,859,765	\$20,586,974	\$9,960,116	\$30,547,090

*Dairy, beef and other livestock manure became eligible for cost-share grants in Fiscal Year 2002. These producers do not receive matching funds from poultry companies.



Qualifying farmers received a one-time signing bonus of up to \$1,000 an acre to establish riparian forest buffers through CREP and the Conservation Buffer Initiative.

ECOSYSTEM INCENTIVES PROGRAM

This program manages a menu of conservation programs and incentive payments that promote clean water, healthy soil, and climate solutions.

Conservation Buffer Initiative

Complements CREP by offering farmers and landowners attractive incentive payments to plant streamside buffers on farms to improve local water quality. Like CREP, farmers receive a one-time bonus payment of \$1,000/acre to install forest buffers. However, this program provides features not offered by CREP including a buffer option for field ditches, flexible site management, and shorter contract terms. In Fiscal Year 2024:

- Payment rates ranged from \$1,500/acre to plant grass buffers next to pastures to a maximum of \$4,500/acre to plant trees next to pastures.
- Up to \$330/acre/year was offered to help cover costs associated with maintaining the forest buffer for the first 5 years of the contract.

- Five farmers received a one-time, \$1,000/acre signing bonus for planting forest buffers.
- During the year, the program awarded Maryland farmers \$457,248 in grants to install 26 buffer projects.

Tree Planting Incentives

A tree-planting bonus is available to farmers and landowners who plant qualifying trees and shrubs financed through MACS. Under this incentive program, eligible farmers receive \$2 for each new tree planted as part of an approved conservation practice. This payment is in addition to the regular cost-share rate offered for the qualifying practices. It is available for the following conservation practices: windbreak establishment, silvopasture systems, riparian forest buffers, hedgerow plantings and tree and shrub establishment. In Fiscal Year 2024, three Maryland farmers were awarded \$2,742 in tree planting incentives.

CREP Signing Bonus

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state partnership program that gives farmers a one-time signing bonus to take

environmentally sensitive land out of production for 10 to 15 years and plant conservation practices that protect soil, water, and wildlife. The bonus is on top of attractive annual rental payments farmers receive to maintain grass, shrubs, trees, or wetlands on sensitive land for the life of their contracts. Newly enrolled farmers and landowners who plant riparian forest buffers receive a one-time signing bonus of up to \$1,000 per acre for this highly valued practice. In Fiscal Year 2024, 262 landowners were awarded \$264,531 in signing bonuses for 2,396 acres of enrolled land.

Cover Crop Plus

This program pays higher incentives for enhanced cover crop practices to promote greater biodiversity and improved residue management to build soil health. Enrolled farmers agree to grow cover crop mixes on the same field for three consecutive years, maintain a living root system, and manage the cover crop for maximum benefits. During the year, the program funded 16 projects on 3,342 acres of land for an investment of \$435,967.



Conservation Equipment Tax Break

The Maryland Income Tax Subtraction Modification for Conservation Equipment helps farmers offset costs to buy certain types of conservation equipment to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect local water quality. The incentive allows farmers to subtract eligible equipment purchases from taxable income on Maryland individual and corporate tax returns. In Fiscal Year 2024, 141 farmers took advantage of the tax subtraction.

Low Interest Loans

Low Interest Loans for Agricultural Conservation (LILAC) are offered to help farmers install best management practices on their farms, purchase conservation equipment, and adopt new technologies to protect natural resources. These loans are guaranteed by the Maryland Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund. In Fiscal Year 2024, 2 applications for \$270,500 were approved.

SMALL FARM AND URBAN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

This program supports small-scale farming operations in urban, suburban, and rural areas, offering a pathway for growth and success. Its aim is to help growers improve the natural resources that support healthy, fresh, community-grown food to increase community access to nutritious foods.

Small Acreage Cover Crop Grants

These grants are for urban and small-scale producers who want to improve the health of their soil and reduce erosion and runoff. Individual growers, organized for-profit agricultural businesses, and non-profit organizations can receive up to \$1,500 annually to plant cover crops on less than 10 acres. In Fiscal Year 2024, the program funded 25 cover projects for a total investment of \$20,323.

Water and Power Infrastructure Program

Authorized by the 2022 Maryland General Assembly, this program provides grants to help urban farms and community gardens purchase and install equipment to access water and electricity. Grants cover up to 87.5% of eligible costs and are available year-round to qualifying operations in urban designated zip codes. Water meters, water pipes, irrigation hoses, electric meters, electrical lines, and other authorized equipment are eligible for funding. In Fiscal Year 2024, the program funded 1 project for \$13,143.



The Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Program funded 25 cover crop projects during the year.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS DELIVER OUR CONSERVATION GRANTS TO FARMERS

Maryland's 23 soil conservation districts—with technical guidance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service—help farmers choose the right best management practices for their operations, supervise their installation or construction, and develop maintenance plans to keep them in good working order. District staff help farmers calculate costs to install practices and apply for other state and federal grant and loan programs. Best management practices are usually installed as part of a farm's overall Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan. These plans are developed for farmers free of charge by soil conservation district technical staff.

MARYLAND'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS		
Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3	alleganyscd.com
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757	annearundelscd.org
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3	bcscd.org
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3	calvertsoil.org
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3	
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3	carrollsoil.com
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3	cecilscd.com
Charles	301-638-3028	charlesscd.com
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3	
Frederick County	301-695-2803, ext. 3	fcscd.com
Garrett	301-501-5886	garrettscd.org
Harford	410-638-4828	harfordscd.org
Howard	410-313-0680	howardscd.org
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3	kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org
Montgomery	301-590-2855	montgomeryscd.org
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3	pgscd.org
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3	
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3	stmarysscd.com
Somerset	410-621-9310	
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 5	talbotscd.com
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3	conservationplace.com
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3	wicomicoscd.org
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3	worscd.org



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

Conservation Grants Program
 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
 Annapolis, MD 21401
 410-841-5864 | mda.maryland.gov/conservation

Wes Moore, *Governor* | Kevin Atticks, *Secretary*
 Aruna Miller, *Lt. Governor* | Steven A. Connelly, *Deputy Secretary*