



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

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Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes November 10, 2021

Present: Joseph Dymek
Matthew Levi Sellers
Shelby Green
Amy Crone
James Raley
John Murphy

Michael Levensood
Michelle Protani-Chesnik
Clifford Newsome Jr.
Gordon Kretser
Dr. Craig Beyroughty

Absent: Thomas Mullineaux
Kelly Dudeck
Richard Pelz
Frank Allnutt
Carroll Shry Jr.
Benjamin Sowers
Michael Pons
Jonathan Quinn

Donald Maring
Cheryl DeBerry
Elizabeth Hill
Sean Hough
Matthew Nielsen
Dr. Marianne Bailey
Matthew Corey Spies

MDA Staff: Joe Bartenfelder
Cassie Shirk
Jason Schellhardt
Rich Colburn
Steve Connelly
Hans Schmidt

Approval of Minutes:

September minutes were approved 1st by Clifford Newsome Jr. and 2nd by Joseph Dymek.

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

- MAEF has been busy supporting Agriculture Education in Maryland.
- MAEF has been selected, 1 of 4 states in the country, by National Ag in the Classroom to conduct a professional development workshop in July at UMCP for high school science teachers to become more aware of agriculture.
- All MAEF curriculum taught in the mobile science labs is aligned with MSDE.

- MAEF wants to provide every K-12 student in Maryland at least two opportunities to obtain some knowledge of agriculture by 2026.
- MAEF wants to provide an opportunity for middle school youth in public and private schools to explore careers in agriculture through a mobile lab, online curriculum and other strategies by 2026.
- MAEF has created the MAEF BookBAG for teachers on social media. Teachers can check MAEF's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter page for the daily agenda, lessons, videos, and resources to bring engaging, dynamic, and educational Ag resources to the classroom.
- MAEF's mobile science labs are back at schools with updated air filtration and sanitation efforts.
- MAEF's showcases have been on the move! The showcases were featured at 14 events over 59 days. The estimated expose was 300,000 people with approximately 13,000 people actually visiting the showcase.
- MAEF has selected the book **Cows can Moo can you?** For its Ag Literacy Outreach program.
- The 2022-23 Calendar Contest has been launched.
- FFA: Nine FFA members from 5 chapters received their American FFA Degree
- Gwynn Park FFA Chapter was featured during the opening ceremony of the National FFA Convention
- The Ag Science Fair Team from Parkside CTE is one of the top 10 teams (Gold Medal ranking)) in the Plant Science Division of the National FFA Ag Science Fair event.
- Career Development Teams from Catoctin (Ag Sales), Southern High (Food Science) and North Harford High (Nursery/Landscape) FFA Chapters qualified as one of the top 20 teams in their respective events and were invited to compete in-person at the National FFA Convention.
- See attached for Maryland FFA Members Recognized in National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events
- 4-H: Over 30,000 Animal Science & Ag Literacy Projects in Maryland
- Maryland 4-H was selected to develop the 2021 National 4-H Ag Innovators Experience called **Curbing Our Carbon Appetite**.
- 4-H Small Ruminant Research Academy & Entrepreneurship Program available for youth ages 15- 18. These students conducted research with sheep at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center.
- 3,884 Maryland and Virginia youth completed the Animal Husbandry and Quality Assurance educational program.
- Veterinary Science Virtual Experience – Youth 13-18 engaged in a virtual experience where guest speakers presented on a variety of topics including ruminant nutrition, swine health, equine health, livestock parasites, grass, and goats.
- To learn more about local and state 4-H projects visit <https://go.umd.edu/MD4H>.
- Maryland Council for Agricultural Education – MCAE.
- Met on October 14, 2021.

- President, Aaron Geiman.
- Agenda items included: Kirwan Report, World Food Prize, Legislative Updates, Certification for Ag Ed Completers, Shepard University's Sustainable Ag Program, USDA Programs, Maryland Farm Bureau Ag Ed Priorities Follow-up.
- Next meeting will be held on January 13, 2022.

Ag Services- Levi Sellers:

- **Funding Opportunities for Hemp:** In September, during the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture 2021 Annual Meeting, NASDA members amended the organization's policy on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and expanding eligibility to hemp crops with horticultural uses. NASDA members have been the leading voice for supporting the hemp industry since hemp's inclusion in the 2014 Farm Bill.
- Also in September MARBIDCO accepted application from hemp projects for their Value-Added Producer Grant
- **Processing Infrastructure:** Discussions have begun with the MD Dept. of Commerce and Ag about building processing infrastructure and conversations have begun with existing MD manufacturers to explore trials. This exciting news could expand new opportunities for a variety of MD hemp products such as grain and fiber for rope, cement, etc.
- These are very important steps in helping hemp achieve long-term sustainability

Direct Farm Market- Amy Crone:

- Most farmers markets will stay open through Thanksgiving
- The Farmers Market Nutrition Program goes through the first week of December, when farmers have to deposit checks before they expire. MDA along with other states that implement this program are looking into ways to shift this program to an electronic format since the companies that print the checks are exiting the business. (see last month's report for a brief summary of this situation nationwide).
- Many vendors didn't return to markets this year, since established direct connections with their customers during the pandemic and can reduce the expense of attending FMs.
- On-farm markets continue to feature fall products (pumpkins, etc.) and soon holiday foods as well.
- The National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) has won a grant from USDA to work on enabling DMFs and FMs to accept SNAP online via e-commerce platforms; that work has begun and hopefully will be an option in time for the 2022 season.
- Winter meetings and conferences continue to be a mix of in-person and hybrid but all plan to have some sort of their regular programming for DMFs and FMs.

Nursery I- James Raley:

- Mr. Raley shared information from the October 2021 Greenhouse Report published by Stanton Gill, Extension Specialist with the University of Maryland Extension. In

the October 27, 2021 Greenhouse Report there was a discussion about using marigolds as a fall crop. This plant is generally considered as a summer annual, not a fall crop. In India, the marigold, is used for religious ceremonies and for weddings. There is a growing population of people from India living in central Maryland. This audience may be more receptive to the idea of fall-blooming marigolds for use in weddings and religious ceremonies. Additionally, the plants could also be marketed as an excellent source of nectar and pollen for pollinator activity in a fall landscape.

- The 2022 Chesapeake Green Horticulture Symposium is scheduled as an in-person event. It will be held February 17 and 18, 2022, at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, MD.
- Mr. Raley reported on the October 2020 meeting of the Maryland Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). Three groups presented information about grant resources available for Soil Conservation Districts in the effort to address non-point sources of pollution from agriculture.
- A representative for the Chesapeake Bay Trust presented an overview of Trust's grant program. Since 2013, the Trust has awarded over \$2.8 million for pollution control projects that have a farm or agricultural component.
- Staff with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation presented information about the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund. This fund has a broad geographic reach that includes areas that comprise the Bay's tributaries on the East Coast. Since 1999, the fund has awarded over 1,200 grants totaling roughly \$176 million and leveraged \$260 million in additional local matching funds for local restoration actions and watershed restoration.
- Personnel with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources presented an update on the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund. Its singular focus is on reducing non-point sources of nutrient and sediment pollution. Money in the fund is granted to local governments and other political subdivisions for agricultural, forestry, stream and wetland restoration, and urban and suburban storm water non-point source pollution control projects. Currently, the fund has over \$10.5 million active awards to county soil conservation districts for various stream and wetland improvement projects.
- The Maryland Farm Bureau convention will be held in person at the Hyatt Resort in Cambridge, MD from December 4 through December 7. Former Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton from Cornerstone Consulting will host a breakout session about legislative matters, current and future, affecting agriculture in Maryland.

Nursery II- Jonathan Murphy:

- Special thanks to Jenny Rhodes and her son Matt during the tour.
- Also thanks to legislatures that were able to attend.
- The fall season for nursery was rough with the biggest problem being labor.
- The green house business suffered a lot with loss of labor.
- The early season sales in the nursery, garden center, and greenhouses were brisk with most businesses finding above average sales. Sales slowed down early in June after the COVID-19

restrictions were lifted and the consumers hit the roads. The plant industry faced challenges from the lack of labor and shortage of materials to produce products. The increase in COGS forced many growers to increase prices. Leading Horticultural Economist Charlie Hall forecast a price increase of 7.59% will be needed for nurseries to cover the increasing cost of containers, propagative plants, labor, freight and other COGS for the 2021 season. Another increase of 2.73% is forecast for the 2022 season.

- Traditional vegetable, herb and Ethnic food starter plants are increasingly becoming popular with the increased sales of these products at the food markets in the Mid-Atlantic Region.
- Greenhouse construction is moving at a fast pace due to growers of Horticultural products and Medical Cannabis.
- MANTS Baltimore has plans to be in person this coming January 5-7. The MANTS board is monitoring COVID-19 closely to make any necessary adjustments for a safe show. A contingency plan will be to have the show online if any COVID restrictions require the show to not be in person.
- AmericanHort is making plans for its annual trip to Washington DC on September 20-22 to advocate for decisions that will help the landscaper, plant grower, garden retailer, and the green industry as a whole to continue our growth. Members from the Maryland Nursery, Landscape, and Greenhouse Growers Association will attend along with members from state associations across the nation.

Poultry I- Michael Levensgood:

- **DCA responds to EIP report about chicken farms and Maryland regulations:**
Delmarva Chicken Association spokesman James Fisher made the following statement about a new Environmental Integrity Project report targeting Maryland's chicken community. You can help more people see our statement by sharing it on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), or via email - find it on the web [here](#).
- When your goal is to cripple the business models of family-owned chicken farms in the name of activism, you have to be willing to make some outlandish claims, as this report does. But even this report, in its fine print, documents Maryland chicken farmers' overwhelming compliance with environmental regulations. The report shows that only 6 percent of chicken farms recorded possible over application of litter to farm fields in annual implementation reports (AIRs), and that the vast majority of Maryland poultry farms are in compliance with their nutrient management plans.
- This group and its allies want states to bleed farmers dry with punitive fines that force families to leave farming behind. That outcome would lead to even more strain on the food supply chain we all depend on. Fortunately,



Maryland takes a different approach, working with farmers to help them make course corrections. The report grudgingly notes the success of this approach, documenting that 'the number of sites considered by MDE to have "significant violations" - meaning violations that are chronic or threaten significant impact to the environment -- has declined' (page 19 of the report).

- **Vegetative Buffer's dust-blocking value in action:** DCA worked with University of Delaware Cooperative Extension to visualize how air moving out of a chicken house's tunnel fan encounters vegetative environmental buffers nearby, and how closely VEB tall grasses can be sited to absorb dust, noise and odor without interfering with airflow. See the video below, and to keep up with our 'Buffer Bites' series and other YouTube content from DCA, [subscribe to our channel!](#) DCA is in the process of hiring an Agriculture Conservation Specialist (that's the new role of Jim Pass water's position). If you know anyone who might be interested drop a line to Holly Porter or the DCA office.
- **Labor:** This continues to be the biggest opportunity for the industry and farmers, inability to find people willing to work even with increased wages and incentives.

Poultry II- Michelle Protani- Chesnik:

- A lot of folks are resisting to being vaccinated.
- Can't find labor people don't want to work and if they do they don't work for long.
- Supply chain is limited.
- DAFS, dissolved air flotation solids has been a fight in Wicomico County for a while now.
- Neighbors are complaining about DAFS smell and then traffic.
- Have spread DAFS for over twenty five years and have to watch violations of the right to farm bill.
- Legislation this year with reports is going to be interesting for the poultry department.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome Jr.:

- Thanks to staff for tour of Kent and Queen Anne's county.
- Grange all over the state held separate elections of officers for the next two years.
- The Maryland Grange met in Frederick to elect state officers for the next two years.
- Many reservations concerning state a national issues have been approved.
- One issue is how to get funding and staffing for local extension offices.
- Getting staffing and having the funds available to pay them seem to be an issue not only state wide but nationwide.
- The national funding for internet is going forward.
- Allen and Kay Styles are representing the Maryland Grange at the national grange convention being held at Wichita Falls.

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- Sod Sales are strong.
- During the second half of 4th quarter sod sales stay strong in the new home construction business.
- Cost increases have put major pressure on sod farmers to increase their prices to their customers.
- Cost increases seem to be accepted by their customers without too much pushback.
- Costs that sod farmers are experiencing: Fertilizer, Chemicals, Seed, Labor, Trucking, Fuel, Pallets, Equipment, and Equipment Repairs.
- Grass Seed industry is experiencing extremely low inventory due to historically poor harvest in 2021.
- Tall Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, Bluegrass, and Fine Fescues will be very difficult to find in spring of 2022. This will affect retail grass seed, sod farmers, landscapers, and erosion control contractors.
- Forage seed like Orchardgrass, Timothy, and Tall Fescue will also be in short supply. This will affect hay farmers and any farming operation that grazes livestock.
- Cover Crop seeds should not be an issue in 2022.
- The National Sod Checkoff program being organized by the Turf Producers International (TPI) plays to have proposals through the USDA by spring 2022 where Maryland Sod Farmers will have an opportunity to vote on whether they want to have a Checkoff program or not.

University: Dr. Craig Beyroudy-

- The university is open and classes are in session. Students and teachers are in the classrooms, the laboratories and the fields.
- Our extension offices and research centers are open so it is as close to pre-COVID as we can get.
- Folks are back to the office so we are excited.
- Really excited about three programs that we are involved in that are impacting state wide and working directly with MDA and state agencies.
- One program is the Farm Stress Program that was recently announced which is a 500 thousand dollar grant that we have partnered with MDA in order to address a lot of issues involved with stress and stress management.
- ALEI was dealing with issues involving bankruptcies and how that leads to aspects of farm stress.
- Also involved with Food System Resiliency Program. This addresses issues with food availability, accessibility and affordability. Dealing with production of food all the way to consumption of food.
- The Climate assessment of agriculture is the third program. We are all working together when dealing with this assessment.
- Position announcements one for the Associate Dean for Extension and one for the Director of Institute for Applied Agriculture.

Staff Updates:

Joe Bartenfelder:

- As most of you know next month is the farm bureau convention in Cambridge. It will be interesting because it is a little more than a month before legislative session starts so we will be talking a lot about those issues.
- Carroll County had a celebration for reserving 75 thousand acres of farm land meaning it is guaranteed to be in agriculture and farms.
- Their goal is 100 thousand acres have gotten 3 more since the 75 thousand put in so have about 23 more to reach goal and the last 25 will be hardest to get.
- Press release on stress relief program that we are partnering with The University of MD for 500 thousand grant from USDA.
- Pressures on farmers and when added COVID it only increased the stress.
- This week spoke to mid-shore regional health group in Denton and had good turnout of local farmers along with Dean Beyroughty.
- Update from Cassie on legislative session.

Rich Colburn:

- Session starting in January.
- December 6th special session on congressional redistricting.

Steve Connelly:

- Dairy margin coverage program signup through FFA has not been announced yet due to some changes made to pandemic legislation that changed program legislation so it is going through the Rural MD office.
- Hope to see sign up soon.
- MDA will pay premiums for dairy farmers to participate.
- October was horse month and had some big events in Maryland.
- International 5 star event at Fair Hill went well with international and national coverage.
- MD million was the following weekend.
- Dog breeder task force with a set of legislatures looking to see if we need regulation and licensing on dog breeders at state level.
- With holidays coming up promote state products with Christmas trees, apples, kale, collards, oysters, and even promoting blue cat fish.
- One highlight, the Christmas tree that will be lite at the Rockefeller Center in New York comes from Cecil county Maryland.

Jason Schellhardt:

- Season premium of season 9 of Maryland Farm and Harvest with a new episode every Tuesday and available on website.

Cassie Shirik:

- General assembly special session on December 6th to take up the redistricting maps and veto overrides.
- Rolling into session starting in January no specifics to what we will expect right now but making our rounds with leaderships and what we will expect for the upcoming session.
- Work with partners at Farm Bureau and DCA and Rural Maryland Council on how we can work together as a united front.
- Playing a lot of defense this session and how we can work together.
- Will provide list of all bills we are tracking and reporting on once session starts.

Hans Schmidt:

- Started campaign on manure transport program.
- Recognizing that commercial fertilizer prices are escalating out of sight we believe there will be more demand for litter so put a campaign for farmers to book litter as early as possible.
- Announcement 1000 dollar acres program for land owners putting in repairing forest buffers.
- Buffers are one practice that helps us with our WIP goals.
- Help get owners and farmers into soil conservation office to sign up for the program.
- Long process recruitment for soil districts we just went through 3rd recruitment for 24 positions.
- We have started to make offers and earliest ones will start in district offices next week.
- Confident that we will fill all these positions the governor granted a year ago.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:05am respectfully submitted by: Jessica O'Sullivan