

Montgomery Conservation Connection



Montgomery Soil
Conservation
District
18410 Muncaster Rd
Derwood, MD 20855
301-590-2855

October 2018

Montgomery County Celebrates 50 Years of Conservation Tillage

During the 1960's conventional tillage was viewed as the gold standard for cultivating corn across the United States. During this time, Montgomery County farmers found their yields well below the average production for the State. With farm profitability hanging in the balance, developers began eyeing Montgomery County farmland for developmental purposes. This troubled Robert "Bob" Raver, now retired County Extension Agent, so much that he began researching new methods that could help increase farm yields as well as overall farm profitability. Through this research he learned about a new, no till planting method that not only could help increase yields by reducing the tillage of farm fields but also resulted in numerous other benefits. These benefits included creating a more efficient and sustainable means to produce commodity crops while conserving soil moisture, protecting soil from erosion and greatly improving water quality in the County. Seeing this as an important initiative, he took a trip to observe this new reduced tillage method being put into practice. Bob was so impressed that it inspired him to bring conservation tillage or no-till to farmers in Montgomery County. In 1968, Bob and Tom Kelly, a



Robert "Bob" Raver Retired Extension Agent Received Proclamation from Councilmen Craig Rice (Left) & Sidney Kramer (Right)

local farmer, teamed up to plant the County's first no-till field. Bob remarked that this first planted field looked pretty good and it was enough to convince 17 new farmers to try this new technology the following year. It didn't take long for the benefits of conservation tillage to be realized. By 1979, corn yields had improved by nearly 30 bushels per acre, raising the County above the Statewide average and putting them on par with Eastern Shore farmers. The rest, as they say, is history.

On July 20th, over 120 Montgomery County Farmers and County Officials gathered at the Montgomery County Agricultural Center to recognize Bob Raver and to celebrate 50 years of Conservation Tillage in Montgomery County.

During the recognition ceremony and luncheon Bob was honored with a County Council Proclamation presented to him by Council-

men Rice and Katz and a Secretary's Citation from the Maryland Department of Agriculture. During the Council Proclamation, Rob Raver was honored with the distinction of being officially recognized as the father of no-till agriculture in Montgomery County.

Earlier in the day County farmers and Officials toured Jamison Ag and Turf in Poolesville tour and no-till drill demonstration.

One thing is for certain, the impacts of conservation tillage cannot be understated. Its acceptance and its implementation as the preferred planting method by farmers has not only been responsible for protecting our precious soil resources but has aided greatly in improved soil health and has contributed to the economic well-being of the Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County. "This method of farming that we started here, I think, is what helped make us so healthy and I think we're going to continue growing for a long time," Raver said. "When I drive around the County and I see all the good growing crops and seeing all the land that is still in agriculture, it is a very satisfying thing for me."

Calendar

Close Encounters with
Agriculture
October 9—26

Cover Crop
Aerial Seeding Deadline
October 14

Barley and BCSC/
Cultipacker Deadline
October 15

Final Planting Date
November 5

Fall Certification
November 12



District Honored with Multiple Awards During MASCD Annual Summer Meeting



Pictured from right to left is Charles Rice, President of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Robert Butz, Chair, Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD), Pam Saul, MSCD Treasurer, Wade Butler, MSCD Vice-Chair, John Zawitoski, MSCD District Manager, Robert Stabler, MSCD Supervisor and Robert Butts, MSCD Supervisor.

On July 30th, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors attended the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) Awards Banquet held in conjunction with the MASCD Summer Meeting. The awards banquet is an annual function of the summer meeting whereby the Association recognizes Districts for the outstanding work they perform each year. During the awards banquet the Montgomery District was honored with several Association Awards. The District Newsletter, "Montgomery Conservation Connection" was honored for the second year in a row as Outstanding Newsletter. "We take great pride in providing a newsletter that is not only informative but reports timely news and other articles of interest that is appealing to a diverse audience of readers" said Pam Saul, MSCD Treasurer. The District was also recognized with being awarded Conservation Education District of the Year. "Conservation education is such a big part of what our District does and remains a high priority of our Board" said Robert Butz, District Board Chairman. "We have excellent staff that take every opportunity to make the conservation of our soil and water resources a learning opportunity, whether it be through programs like Envirothon, the Close Encounters with Agriculture Program, Pasture Walks, Classroom Seminars, Legislative Tours, or through the interactions associated with one on one farm visits. Also, our social media outreach efforts remain a District priority."

The District was also recognized by the Association as the 3rd place finalist for the Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit Outstanding District of the Year award. "We are very appreciative to MASCD for this Award Recognition" said John Zawitoski, MSCD District Manager. "2017 was a year of change for the District, as it saw the departure of both the District Manager and District Conservationist. These changes placed greater demand on staff to pull together to get the work of the District done in both an efficient and timely manner to serve our cooperators and County residents. I cannot be prouder of our staff for rising up to face these challenges head on!". The District was also honored by having Anthony Righter, District volunteer, being recognized for the MASCD Outstanding Youth Award. "Anthony is an exceptional young man who is well deserving of this recognition and we couldn't be prouder of him and of his efforts in promoting soil and water conservation" said Robert Butz, District Chairman.



Local Work Group

The Montgomery County Local Work Group (LWG) held a meeting on September 14, 2018 to receive input for this year's local funding priorities within the County. This is an important step that helps determine what conservation practices will be eligible for federal cost share funding. A large thank you to those who participated!

Like last year, Fiscal Year 2019 (which begins Oct 1st) will have a local fund pool of \$100,000.00 available for applicants in Montgomery County. This allotted funding will be for participants to install Best Management

Practices under Federal program guidelines with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

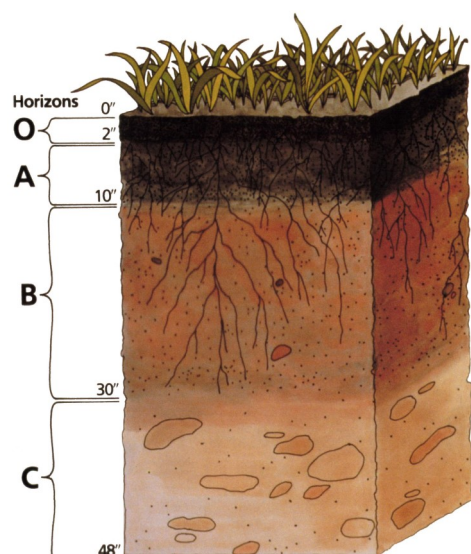
On an annual basis, applicants vying for federal dollars through NRCS programs may have a lesser chance of getting funding due to competing with others in the region and/or State.

Those folks looking to apply for the LWG funding will only compete within the County for the local funding. This increases the likelihood of proposed conservation practices becoming funded.

Many LWG participants highlighted the recent weather events and potential impacts of additional rain on our lands. In addition to livestock production needs for rotational grazing and pasture renovations it was mentioned that many cropland grassed waterways will need to be rebuilt. High tunnels were again requested as a priority because they typically are not funded when competing against other practices state wide.

Priority will be provided for those practices relating to the fencing of streams and pasture land, pasture renovation, grassed waterways, critical area plantings, and high tunnels. Please contact the Montgomery Soil Conservation office at 301-590-2855 to apply for Federal programs.

Soil Health: What is it and Why is it Important?



Soil Health is the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans. This includes nutrient cycling, water infiltration and availability, filtering, physical stability and habitat. **Why is this important to us?** As the world's population grows, estimated to be 9.1 billion by 2050, food production will need to rise by 70%. Between 1982 and 2007, 14 million acres of prime farmland in the U.S. were lost to development. In the future, healthy soils will be integral in the challenge to feed the world.

There are four soil health principles. They include minimize soil disturbance, maximize plant diversity, keep living roots in the soil and always cover the soil with living plants. The characteristics of a stable ecosystem include low disturbance, high diversity, low human inputs and highly functioning ecosystems. Historically, intensive tillage was a common farming practice used to ready the soil for planting and to control weeds. Overgrazing and high stocking rates have impacted pasture land as well. Decades of intensive tillage resulted in the loss of soil organic matter, increased erosion, soil compaction, decreased water infiltration and decreased soil biodiversity. Compaction, poor plant health and low plant diversity have resulted in unhealthy pastures.

In the late 1960's a few pioneers in Montgomery County began to experiment with low disturbance equipment to help reduce soil erosion and improve crop production. This summer, the County celebrated 50 years of Conservation Tillage.

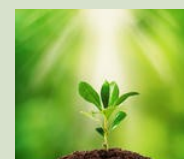
Healthy soils are teeming with biodiversity. This includes plants, animals and micro-organisms. Healthy soils have stable soil aggregates that stick together and are less prone to erosion. Healthy soils infiltrate water more effectively. Research has shown that continuously tilled soil will infiltrate water at a rate of 1.5" per hour. A field which has been no-tilled for 10 years will infiltrate at a rate of 2.6" per hour. In a year like 2018, where heavy rain events were more frequent, a no-till system will better utilize the rain water and will therefore reduce runoff and soil erosion. Reduced soil erosion is critical to maintaining productive soils and the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Another important tool in the farming toolbox are cover crops. Maryland farmers have been utilizing winter cover crops for years to help reduce erosion and sequester excess nutrients in the soil. Cover crops also provide additional benefits. These include adding biomass, preventing erosion, moderation of soil temperatures, reduction of evaporation, reducing compaction, feeding the soil microbes and feeding nutrient cycles.

The Best Management Practices available to farmers that help improve soil health include no-till planting as well as other common practices. These are multi-species cover crops, nutrient management planning, diverse crop rotations, animal waste utilization, pest management and crop residue management.

If you are having problems with soil compaction, soil erosion, water infiltration, poor yields, pest and disease issues, there are ways to combat these problems. Changes whether good or bad don't typically happen overnight. So a long-term plan may be needed for your farm. The Soil Conservation District can assist you with any resource concerns you might have. Improved soil health on your farm can lead to reduced inputs, improved yields and a more sustainable farming operation. Feel free to contact us to discuss any problems you might have.

BECOME A SOIL HEALTH CHAMPION



The Soil Health
Champion Network is
Sponsored by the
Nation Association of
Conservation Districts

**CONTACT MSCD FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

PHONE: 301-590-2855

NOTICE: 2018-2019 Cover Crop Program

MDA is allowing low
germination seed only
for the 2018-2019
Cover Crop Program.
Increased seeding rates

will apply.

Contact MSCD for
additional information.
301-590-2855



2018 Annual Cooperators Dinner



Despite Record Setting Temperatures, the Cooperators Dinner was a Big Success!

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District Cooperators dinner is a very important event. The purpose of our annual dinner is to take a break from our day to day activities to gather and celebrate soil and water conservation here in Montgomery County.



(Right) Michael Jamison-Jamison Ag & Turf

It allows us to take the time to promote and educate others about the importance of being good stewards of the land, keep the community up-to-date on the changing environmental landscape as well as to recognize the cooperators in the County who have made a commitment to conservation. Through these efforts it provides the opportunity to share our conservation experiences and exchange information with attendees in a very informal setting.

Even more importantly, the dinner provides a pathway to extend our sincerest “thank you” to everyone that helps to make the conservation of our natural resources in the County a priority.

The venue for this year’s dinner was the Mount Pleasant Farm in Poolesville which was graciously provided by our host, William F. Willard, his family and staff. Despite the incredibly excessive heat, over 130 individuals attended and enjoyed the peaceful surroundings, presentations, recognitions and partook in a delicious meal. On-site our host provided a display of both modern and antique farm equipment, vintage automobiles and discussed his family’s long history and tradition of farming in the County. We also had a local farmer who discussed how their farming operation employs precision agriculture to improve yields, reduce fertilizer and pesticide costs along with the added benefit of being more protective of the environment and improving the overall health of the soil. The Keynote Speaker for the evening was Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary to the Maryland Department of Agriculture. He provided a presentation on the process concerning the Agricultural component of the State’s Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Phase III that is currently under development. Mr. Schmidt offered praise for Montgomery County farmers that attended the County’s Agricultural WIP III meeting on August 29th indicating that Montgomery County had the highest meeting participation of any other County in the State”. Meeting participants were very engaged and provided lots of feedback.

The good news according to Assistant Secretary Schmidt, based on projections discussed during the meeting, Montgomery County should be able to meet their nutrient reduction goals by 2025 if the implementation plan is successful.



The evening event culminated with the presentation of several awards to individuals that were conservation leaders this year within Montgomery County.

Anthony Righter was recognized for the District’s Youth Volunteer of the Year Award for his unselfish acts of volunteerism and the time he gave to our community. “Anthony has embodied the spirit of volunteerism as well as his commitment to personal growth” said Robert Butz, Chairman of the Montgomery Soil Conservation District. “We are very proud of Anthony as he was recognized earlier this summer by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts by receiving the **MASCD**



2018 Award Recipient Anthony Righter
with MSCD Chairman, Robert Butz

Outstanding Youth Award.” The Montgomery Soil Conservation Board of Supervisors also expressed their appreciation by recognizing him with the District’s **Youth Volunteer of the Year Award** for his efforts in assisting the District and our agricultural partner agencies this year.

The District also recognized Lisa Righter with the District’s Conservation and Education Award. This Award recognizes those individuals that dedicate their time and talents to help advance the District’s conservation and education programs. Ms. Righter is an individual always working behind the scenes to not only assist with our conservation and education outreach programs but being a force in helping shape their content and program delivery. “We are very grateful to Lisa Righter for everything she has done to advance our conservation and education programs” said John Zawitoski, District Manager, and in recognition of this, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors wishes to express their appreciation by recognizing Lisa as the recipient of the District’s **Conservation and Education Award”**.



2018 Award Recipient Lisa Righter with
MSCD Chairman, Robert Butz

Last but certainly not least, the District honored Dr. Lucy Tidd with the District’s most coveted and prestigious award, the 2018 Cooperator of the Year. Since 2015, when Dr. Tidd first purchased the 57-acre property known as Locks Edge Farm, she has completed the development of a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan for the farm and worked diligently with the installation of Best Management Practices and other conservation measures utilizing State and Federal cost share assistance. “We prepared a large poster that shows the aerial history of the conservation work performed on the farm. The visual transformation of Locks Edge Farm is truly amazing” said John Zawitoski, District Manager. Dr. Tidd’s commitment to conservation on her farm makes her very worthy of the **2018 Cooperator of the Year**.



Dr. Lucy Tidd—Locks Edge Farm

Overall the event was a huge success and we hope all that attended enjoyed the evenings events. We hope to see everyone again for next year’s Cooperators Dinner.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Conservation Sponsors:
**Farm & Equine Business
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Laytonsville Turf Farm
Sunny Ridge Farm

Conservation Supporters:
Gladhill Brothers
Mid Atlantic Farm Credit
Montgomery Weed Control

And our hosts:
**William F. Willard
Farms, LLC !**



Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary to the
Maryland Department of Agriculture.

*Looking forward to seeing you
next year at the MSCD
Annual Cooperators Dinner*



Maryland Secretary Tours Local Farms, Recognizes Multigeneration Family Farm

On September 25th Maryland Agricultural Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder along with other officials from the Maryland Department of Agriculture toured several Montgomery County farms following the Governor's Cabinet Meeting held earlier in the day at the Olney Theater in Olney, Maryland. The first stop on the tour was to Brooke Grove Farm, an equestrian operation that is owned and operated by Dr. Charles Mess. During the tour Dr.



Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder with Dr. Charles Mess of Brooke Grove Farm

Mess discussed his operation and how appreciative he was to have technical assistance agencies like the District and Extension to help solve the conservation needs of his farm. Some of the more notable conservation practices that have been implemented on his farm include: a waste storage/ composting facility, remote watering facilities, stream fencing, a stream crossing, a rotational grazing system, construction of an on-farm pond, implementation of a roof runoff system. "As with many of our cooperators, Dr. Mess has utilized cost share programs to implement several practices on his farm. His deep commitment to conservation is evident by the investment of conservation work achieved at his own expense," said John Zawitoski, District Manager.

After touring Brooke Grove Farm, the Secretary visited Pleasant Valley Farm Market just outside of Laytonsville. Robert Stabler, Randy Stabler, J. B. Debnam and Shelby Stabler, owners and farm operators of Pleasant Valley Farm, discussed

how the operation has evolved over the years as a result of multigenerational family members being part of the family farm. They had to pursue other avenues to become more diversified to meet the farm income needs. While farming over 3,700 acres in Cecil, Kent and Montgomery Counties, a decision was made about 6 years ago to expand the operation and open a farm market to sell sweet corn and other fruits and vegetables directly to consumers. "We were a little nervous at first, but we feel this was the right decision" said Randy Stabler. "Marketing to consumers is a big responsibility and we are learning new things all the time". During the visit, Secretary Bartenfelder presented both a Governor's Citation and Secretary's Citation to Pleasant Valley Farm. "In recognition of Pleasant Valley Farm's long-standing commitment to soil and water conservation and for being leaders in the agricultural community through both innovative and diversified agricultural products as well as multigenerational farm management, on behalf of the Governor and myself, thank you for your contributions to Maryland Agriculture" said Secretary Bartenfelder.

The tour culminated with visits to Waredaca Brewing Company, Montgomery County's first on farm brewery, and to Rockhill Orchard. The Secretary met with Stephanie Snyder Butts of Waredaca where they discussed the ups and downs associated with starting an on-farm brewery. Then with John Fendrick, owner and operator of Rockhill Orchard and Woodbourne Creamery, where the Secretary and staff partook in some freshly made, farm produced ice cream. The tour provided an excellent opportunity for Secretary Bartenfelder to experience Montgomery County's diverse agricultural industry and our farmers commitment to soil and water conservation.



Pleasant Valley Farm Left to Right Robert Stabler, J.B. Debnam, Secretary Joseph Bartenfelder Randy Stabler & Shelby Stabler



University of Maryland Extension will offer the following programs this fall at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood. If you are interested in any of these programs please contact Chuck Schuster either by email cfs@umd.edu or by phone 301-590-2807.

October 31, 2018 Pesticide Private Applicator License Training.
6:30-9:00 p.m.

November 7, 2018 Pesticide Private Applicator License Test-MDA Administered 6:00 p.m.

November 27, 2018 Pesticide Private Applicator Recertification
6:30-8:30 p.m.

December 5, 2018 Nutrient Management Voucher Training/Recertification
6:30-9:00 p.m.

Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan Enters its Third Phase



Whether you are a farmer, a business owner, or a private citizen, our interactions on the land contribute to water quality concerns associated with nutrients and sediment that find their way into our creeks, streams, rivers and ultimately to the Chesapeake Bay. The goal of cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay is not a new one. Beginning in 1972 with the passing of the Federal Clean Water Act, Maryland along with the rest of the nation embarked on an effort to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation's waters, which included the Chesapeake Bay. Since then, Maryland and the adjacent bay jurisdictions have been working cooperatively by addressing nutrient and sediment reductions within their areas. The latest effort, called the Watershed Implementation Plan, began in 2010 when the Environmental Protection Agency established Total Maximum Daily Loads ("TMDLs") for the six bay states and the District of Columbia capping loads of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. The TMDLs required bay jurisdictions to establish the accountability framework known today at the Watershed Implementation Plan or ("WIP"). The WIP process was divided into three phases which was intended to provide a road map whereby each bay jurisdiction could achieve their nutrient and sediment goals by 2025.

Earlier this summer, Maryland began the process of putting together the third and final phase of Maryland's WIP by organizing meetings across the State with the bay watershed stakeholders to discuss the measures that would be needed to achieve bay reductions goals. Bay stakeholders were categorized into 4 individual sectors: Agricultural, Wastewater Treatment Plants, Urban & Suburban Stormwater Management and Septic Systems. Under the WIP III planning process, individual meetings would be scheduled with each individual WIP sector stakeholder to examine progress made under the WIP II and then strategize as to what additional measures could be implemented to achieve the specified reduction goals for the State by 2025.

On August 29th, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, held the Agricultural WIP III local planning meeting at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood. Farmers from across the County participated in this important meeting. The objective of this meeting was to present to the agricultural community the progress agriculture had made so far under the WIP Phase I and II and to explore opportunities to achieve additional reductions of nutrients and sediments through the implementation of agriculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). Jason Keppler, Program Manager for the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Watershed Implementation Program led the discussion. "I want to first thank all the farmers that have come to attend today's meeting" said Jason. "Montgomery County has by far had the greatest number of farmers attending these agricultural WIP meetings from across the State and we thank you for being engaged in this important planning process."

During the meeting we learned that while both agriculture and the upgrades to wastewater treatment plants are responsible for the lion share of nutrients reduced among all sectors, so far, there are still gaps in nutrient reductions that need to be addressed by implementing additional conservation measures on farms. The discussion raised numerous questions concerning the sources of agricultural data as well as what the other sectors and jurisdictions have accomplished thus far in meeting their nutrient and sediment reduction goals. After some lively exchanges, the group focused on the objective of the meeting. They examined the local progress made and evaluated what additional measures could be achieved between now and 2025 to meet Montgomery County's agricultural nutrient and sediment reduction goals. Once these measures were identified, the Maryland Department of Agriculture conducted a simulated bay nutrient and sediment model run and determined that if the measures identified as part of the meeting were achieved, Montgomery County farmers would meet nutrient and sediment reduction goals by 2025.

While this is indeed very positive news for Montgomery County agriculture, there were concerns raised about whether the other sectors would be able to achieve a similar outcome and concerns were raised about future "asks" to the agricultural community for additional reductions if the other sectors fail to meet their respective goals.

The biggest take away from this meeting was that everyone, not just farmers, have a responsibility to reduce their nutrient and sediment footprint on our landscape. As members of Montgomery County's community, we all have a responsibility to be good stewards of the land and to take steps needed that will result in a better quality of life and improved economic prosperity for our region. Later this fall, there will be a public meeting in Montgomery County that will outline not only the plan developed for addressing nutrient and sediment reductions on agricultural land but will also include the plans for the other sectors as well. We strongly encourage everyone to stay engaged in the process and participate in the public meeting. As specifics emerge, including the date, the District will post meeting details on our website as well as through our social media outlets. <https://www.montgomeryscd.org>

Agricultural Conservation Leasing Workshop

Problems with getting conservation on leased land? Then please consider attending the Agricultural Conservation Leasing Workshop. This workshop will help agricultural service providers, landowners and farmers use communication tools and leasing strategies to implement conservation practices on leased farmland.

January 23, 2019 from 8 am to 3 pm, at the Frederick County Extension Office
330 Montevue Lane Frederick, MD 21702

More information and registration available at:
<https://agresearch.umd.edu/agroecol>

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CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**

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Derwood, MD
20855

**[http://
www.montgomeryscd.org](http://www.montgomeryscd.org)**

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