

Montgomery Conservation Connection



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

June 2019

Montgomery County Welcomes New Technical Staff to Assist Farmers

MSCD Welcomes their New Equine Conservation Planner



The Montgomery Soil Conservation District is pleased to welcome Travis Gorleski to our staff as the District's Equine Conservation Planner. Travis comes to the District via the, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). He has served the past 9 years as a Resource Conservation Specialist serving Anne Arundel, Frederick and Montgomery Soil Conservation Districts with their equine outreach and conservation planning needs. Travis earned a B.S. of Geography and Environmental Systems, at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) in 2007 and he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with conservation and educational outreach to our staff. Travis is also a certified Conservation Planner by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and is also a certified Nutrient Management Consultant. These certifications and his past experience working with the District will help him hit the ground running to provide technical assistance to our equine community. Travis began his tenure with the District on May 28th and we encourage you to reach out to him to discuss your conservation needs. Travis can be reached at **301-590-2832** or via email at travis.gorleski@montgomerycountymd.gov

Travis is also a certified Conservation Planner by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and is also a certified Nutrient Management Consultant. These certifications and his past experience working with the District will help him hit the ground running to provide technical assistance to our equine community. Travis began his tenure with the District on May 28th and we encourage you to reach out to him to discuss your conservation needs. Travis can be reached at **301-590-2832** or via email at travis.gorleski@montgomerycountymd.gov

University of Maryland adds Nutrient Management Advisor to their Staff

Earlier this spring, the University of Maryland hired Natalia Salazar as the County's Nutrient Management Advisor. Natalia moved to Montgomery County from Spain almost 10 years ago where she attended Montgomery College then transferred to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. From there she attended the University of Maryland where she earned her Master's Degree in Soils and Agriculture.

During this period, she has worked on two small farms in Montgomery County (Calleva Farm in Dickerson and Chocolates & Tomatoes Farm in Germantown). Today she lives in Germantown where she enjoys activities like walking and canoeing in Black Hill Regional Park. She has aspirations of applying her knowledge of soils and agriculture by tending to her own small vegetable garden one day. While this is her first experience working in the field of Nutrient Management, she has really enjoyed working with the farmers as well as working with the resource professionals in Extension and the partner agricultural agencies in the County. We are very excited to have Natalia on board to help our farmers comply with navigating the Nutrient Management process and regulatory requirements. Natalia replaces Amanda Laudwein who provided assistance with Nutrient Management Planning needs. Natalia's office is located at the Agricultural History Farm Park in the Extension Office. She can be reached at **301-590-2840** or via email at nsalaza1@umd.edu.



Calendar

Winter Cover Crop
Sign-up June 21 – July 17

July 4th—Independence Day
Office Closed



July 27th and 28th
For more information, please call
301-590-2810

Remember to Visit our Booth
At the Montgomery County Fair
August 9-17

Annual Cooperators Dinner
September 11, 2019

Festival: Bluegrass on The Farm
Agricultural History Farm Park
September 14, 2019



2018 MSCD Annual Report

Conservation Cost-Share Assistance for Landowners

An important component of the District is leveraging private investments in conservation between farmers and government sponsored cost-share funding. This service provides additional opportunities for landowners to implement practices that will improve water quality and the stewardship of their lands. These financial incentives represent an important link in the efforts to clean up our local streams and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The District can offer landowners a combination of State, Federal and Local cost-share assistance programs that assist farmers with the protection of their soil, water, and other natural resources. Utilizing funding from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service's Federal Conservation Programs, the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program and the District's Conservation Cost-Share program, we were able to assist Montgomery County farmers in securing over **\$1.26 million** in conservation funding in 2018.

One example of how we assist with leveraging funds for conservation projects is best be illustrated through the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Cover Crop Program. Cover Crops are one of the most important practices for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. Montgomery County farmers continue to embrace this valuable conservation program through their participation. For 2018, Montgomery County farmers certified **7,000** acres of traditional cover crop resulting in cost share payments of more than **\$350,000**. While 2018 saw a reduction in acreage certified as planted by farmers, this was attributable to very poor fall planting conditions that resulted from excessive rainfall. This situation led to the State initiating a late season Healthy Soil Biomass Cover Crop Pilot Program. Under this program, an additional **1,468** acres were established by our cooperators resulting in **\$66,074** as being eligible for program payments to our farmers.



In 2017, the Commodity Cover Crop Program was discontinued at the State level. To fill this conservation program gap, the District funded the first Commodity Cover Crop Program. During 2018, **3,699** acres were certified by producers for payment under the **2017-18** Program. This resulted in a total payout of **\$54,622.50** of program funds. For the **2018-19** program year, over **6,000** acres of Commodity Cover Crop were fall certified, that will provide a total of **\$90,000** in payments to farmers from our program later this year. It is important to understand that the farmers who participate in these cost share programs, commit considerable amounts of private capital as their investment in conservation to help meet nutrient reduction goals associated with the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. This investment demonstrates the agricultural community's commitment to the stewardship of their lands and to restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Outreach to Local and State Elected Officials

Although Montgomery County is the most populated County in the State of Maryland, it boasts a robust and diverse Agricultural Industry that employs over 10,000 people and contributes over \$287 million to the economy. Our thriving agricultural sector is due primarily to our award-winning Agricultural Reserve, a 93,000-acre agricultural zone created in 1980 by the Montgomery County Council to preserve farm land and rural space in the northwestern part of the County. The Agricultural Reserve comprises a third of the County's land mass and is ranked 3rd in the Nation for total acres protected by easements. While we are blessed to have such a wonderful agricultural resource, there are many challenges that face our farmers. One these challenges are the unintended consequences created by new laws and regulations that can cause negative impacts to farmers that threaten agricultural viability and sustainability. During 2018, the MSCD embraced new approaches to conduct outreach that was intended to provide new opportunities to educate both local and State elected officials on the conservation efforts by our agricultural community.

Each winter, the Montgomery Soil Conservation Board of Supervisors travel to in Annapolis for 2 days during the legislative session to meet with State Delegates and Senators to discuss proposed legislation as well as State funding priorities for the benefit of soil conservation, water quality and a better environment. As you can imagine, with a County that has 8 State Senators and 24 Delegates, arranging meetings can be quite daunting over a 2-day period. During this time, Supervisors met with 3 State Senators and 13 Delegates briefing them on the accomplishments of the Districts and how they can assist farmers in addressing resource concerns on their lands. Supervisors also discussed important legislation and the State funding needed to help agriculture meet the Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

To further enhance these efforts, the District, along with our conservation partnership agencies, took the lead in promoting an event for legislators that provided an excellent opportunity for elected officials to meet directly with farmers to discuss the importance of agriculture to the County as well as the many challenges facing the industry today. This event was attended by 14 local and State representatives who interacted with our agricultural leaders as well as the representatives of the agencies that provide assistance to our farmers.



Agricultural Legislative Luncheon

Conservation Education

Close Encounters with Agriculture

Many young people today are unaware of the benefits agriculture provides and how they can become good stewards of the land. Close Encounters with Agriculture (CEWA) creates a special opportunity for students to enjoy a hands-on learning experiences that can create tangible impacts concerning their future. Students often take the lessons learned home and discuss what they have learned with their families. This results in an extension of benefits beyond the student's participation in the program. Each year this 3-week program, presented jointly by University of Maryland Extension and MSCD, provides approximately 4,600 fourth grade students, teachers and parents from across the County with a comprehensive agricultural learning experience. The program includes not only Extension and MSCD staff but also receives volunteer assistance from the County Farm Bureau, local farmers, and members of the Master Gardeners program, who present courses relating to nutrition, production agriculture, conservation and the environment. Each group has a full day of fun activities that provide a great opportunity to learn about things not usually covered in their regular curriculum and reconnects them with their agricultural heritage.



MSCD Staff presentation to 4th grade students on soils

2018 MSCD Annual Report (continued)

Social Media Outreach: Website, Facebook, Twitter and Newsletters:

Most of us use some form of social media every day - and whether it's for personal communication, self-promotion or marketing, we use it religiously. /while humans are creatures of habit, they can also be opinionated and impatient. Those two traits alone are the reasons why social networks thrive. People want the news fast and they want to talk about it now! In 2018, the MSCD made a significant change in the direction of utilizing social media to help promote the District and to use the platforms to "get information out" in a format that informs in short and concise blasts. Through an expanded presence on both Facebook and Twitter, the District published between 20 and 30 "articles" per month covering a wide array of agricultural and land conservation issues. The goal was to have a steady stream of informational posts in a format where information is timely, concise and interesting. The District firmly believes as engagement increases so will our target audience. There is no other media method that can be targeted and accessed by users like these social media outlets and it is the reason we have invested District financial resources in developing and implementing this social media campaign. 2018 also saw a major redesign of the District website, so that our information was more accessible, reader friendly and more aesthetically pleasing. The MSCD has been consistently recognized by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts for its outstanding newsletter. Renamed, Montgomery Conservation Connection in 2017, it is published 3 to 4 times a year, and provides conservation information, program updates, District accomplishments and a variety of import articles to the cooperators, County residents and the community.



Envirothon: The MSCD has one of the most competitive County Envirothon programs in the State with the Montgomery County team finishing no less than fourth in the State competition in the past few years. One strength of our local program involves a very strong interjurisdictional partnerships with local resource professionals, that volunteer their time and talents in training and preparing student led teams on competition day. The District has been also successful in expanding our local program through the engagement of the private sector through organizations like the Izaak Walton League. The 2018 competition saw 15 high school teams comprised of more than 75 students competing for the chance to go to the State contest. The 2018 winning Montgomery County Team placed 4th at the Maryland Statewide Envirothon Competition.



Agricultural Tours: The MSCD and its staff coordinated tours for the public and government officials. During 2018, the District promoted two agricultural tours. On July 20th, Montgomery County celebrated 50 years of Conservation Tillage in County. This event was sponsored by the District, the Office of Agriculture, University of Maryland Extension, Montgomery County Farm Bureau, and numerous agricultural businesses and farmers. During the tour segment of this event, County farmers and officials toured the Jamison Ag and Turf in Poolesville for a small tour of the operation and were treated to a demonstration of no till drill cultivation in action. On September 25th, the MSCD sponsored a tour of Montgomery County Farms for the Maryland Agricultural Secretary (Joseph Bartenfelder along with other officials from the State of Maryland to see the good conservation work our cooperators are doing with the technical assistance provided by the District. Conservation practices toured by the group included:)a waste storage/ composting facility, heavy use areas, remote watering facilities, stream fencing, stream crossings, rotational grazing



systems, construction of an on-farm pond and the implementation of roof runoff systems. These tours of local farms provide our governmental and elected officials access to our cooperators for one on one interactions. These types of open exchanges gives our officials a better understanding of the challenge's cooperators face and exposure to the types of agricultural land uses in our diverse County. The tours also provide opportunities to educate the public as to the voluntary efforts our cooperators participate in to help restore the Bay.

Workshops, Fairs and Expos: The MSCD and staff also interacted with thousands of constituents through participation in local equine workshops, the EcoHoof program for 4-H and Pony Clubs, Close Encounters with Agriculture, Flower and Garden Show, the Potomac Hunt and both the Montgomery County and Maryland State Fairs. The MSCD, and the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture once again joined together to create a booth for the Montgomery County Fair. To enhance this year's exhibit, we partnered with the County's 4-H Electronics Club, to develop an interactive game that young people could play when visiting our agricultural and conservation display. A multitude of interchangeable questions from general ag info to soil and water conservation were switched out during the day for participants to "test their knowledge". Our exhibit was so well received that we were awarded "Grand Champion as Best Agricultural Exhibitor" for 2018. In November of 2018, the District partnered with the American Farmland Trust's Women for the Land Initiative. This Initiative addresses the obstacles women landowners face in accessing conservation programs and resources. In part, the Initiative hosts "learning circles" that empower women landowners to adopt environmentally sound farming practices, protect farmland and improve the viability of their farms.



2018 MSCD Annual Report (continued)

Cooperators Dinner: Our Cooperators dinner is a very important annual event for the District as it provides an opportunity to celebrate soil and water conservation here in Montgomery County. Through the dinner we promote conservation of the land and recognize the cooperators in the County who have made a commitment to the conservation of their land. This in turn serves to educate and inspire other cooperators to join with their peers by discussing their conservation achievements and how they too are working towards being good stewards of the land. Even more importantly, the dinner provides a pathway to extend our sincerest “thank you” to everyone that is working to make the conservation of our natural resources their priority in our County. The 2018 MSCD Cooperators Dinner was held on September 12th at William F. Willard’s Mount Pleasant Farm in Poolesville. Despite the incredibly excessive heat, over 130 individuals attended and enjoyed the peaceful surroundings, presentations and recognitions and partook in a delicious meal. On site there was a display of both modern and antique farm equipment, vintage automobiles, and our host 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 to 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 presented on the process concerning the Agricultural component of the State’s Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Phase III that is currently under development. The focus of the evening was to showcase the agricultural industry and conservation leaders in the County.



2018 Annual Cooperators Dinner



Farmer, Michael Jamison Presenting Precision Agriculture

Agricultural Conservation Programs

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Planning: Eighteen Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans were developed for Montgomery County landowners to protect 1,269 acres of land for 2018. There are over 32,883 acres of farmland covered under current plans with an additional 1,000 acres that are in the conservation planning process. The District continues to expand the availability of programs to our growing equestrian community. During 2018, the District’s Equine Conservationist left the position, while leaving a vacancy, District staff stepped up to help minimize a disruption on assistance created by the vacancy to serve our equine producers. The District is moving forward in filling this vacancy to restore full technical assistance to this important agricultural community for 2019.

The locally grown food production and organic farming movement continues to grow in our area. Consequently, conservation technical assistance, high tunnel installation and conservation planning in urban and suburban areas has also increased. Providing cost-share programs and technical assistance to all these areas of agriculture will continue to be critical components of our conservation efforts throughout Montgomery County.

Best Management Practice (BMP) Implementation

Following is a list of the practices completed by MSCD Cooperators in 2018.

Practice	Extent	Units
Conservation Cover (poll. hab.)	5.3	Acres
Tree/Shrub Establishment	5.8	Acres
High Tunnel System	9,360	Square Feet
Herbaceous Weed Treatment	8.9	Acres
Heavy Use Area Protection	4,224	Square Feet
Critical Area Planting	1.7	Acres
Grassed Waterway	1.3	Acres
Mulching	1.8	Acres
Subsurface Drain	3,205	Feet
Underground Outlet	235	Feet
Agrichemical Handling Facility	1	Structure
Obstruction Removal	0.2	Acres
Roof Runoff Structure	3	Structures
Access Road	1,050	Feet
Cover Crops	13,000	Acres
Healthy Biomass Planting	1,468	Acres
Stoned Waterway or Outlet	0.6	Acres
Waste Storage Structure	1	Structures
Prescribed and Rotational Grazing	8.25	Acres
Fencing for Rotational Grazing System	24,113	Linear Feet
Manure Transport Assistance	1,237,670	Gallons
Small Pond Approvals	4	Ponds
S&E Control Forest Harvests	2	Plans
Greenhouse Stormwater Management	1	Structure



Measures of Success

Our best measure of success continues to be the cooperators that have good experiences in working with the District. They help promote our assistance through their peer to peer networking and is further measured by the number of Cooperators that continue to request our assistance.

Another measure of success that can be best quantified is through the awards and other recognitions we have received this past year. For 2018, the District received several awards from the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD). These award recognitions included: The District Newsletter, "*Montgomery Conservation Connection*" being honored for the second year in a row as **Outstanding Newsletter**. The District was also recognized as the **Conservation Education District of the Year** and was recognized by the Association as the **3rd place finalist for the MidAtlantic Farm Credit's Outstanding District of the Year**.

Robert “Bob” Raver “Father of No-till Agriculture in Montgomery County” Passes Away

It is with heavy hearts we must report the passing of Robert “Bob” Raver who left us at the age of 86. While Bob may have been short in stature, he was a mountain of man when it came to the passion he had for agriculture and the conservation of agricultural land. Bob was well respected among the peers, not only as a valued educator as exhibited during his tenure as Montgomery County’s Extension Agent, but also as a farmer and friend to everyone his life touched. Bob began his career as an Extension Agent in Montgomery County in 1957. He had a rich knowledge of agriculture, he could talk on just about anything ag, from crops to livestock or fruits to vegetables. During the 1960’s, when conventional tillage was the standard method for cultivating corn, Montgomery County farmers found their yield production well below the average production for the State. This troubled Bob so much that he began researching new methods that could help increase farm yields as well as overall farm profitability to help stem the tide of farmland conversion to development. Through his research he learned about a no till cultivation that not only could help increase yields by reducing the tillage of farm fields but also result in numerous other benefits for farmers and residents. After seeing this new reduced cultivation method in action, it impressed Bob so much that he was inspired to bring conservation tillage or no-till to farmers in Montgomery County. 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 being on par with Eastern Shore farmers. Bob retired from the Extension Service in 1987. The rest, as they say, is now history. Bob received many accolades during his distinguished career but some that he was most proud of were being inducted into the Montgomery County Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2011 and then being recognized by his peers with being the Father of No-Till farming in Montgomery County as a part of the 50th Anniversary of Conservation Tillage celebration last July. I first met Bob in 1997 when I was hired to serve as Montgomery County’s Farmland Preservation Program Administrator. While being retired as the County’s extension agent, he was serving, in what would become, a 10-year appointment to the County’s Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB). It was during this time that Bob shared with me his passion for agriculture and the preservation of agricultural land. His leadership was a driving force that inspired me to ensure that his vision for a bright agricultural future in Montgomery County would be realized. Not only was Bob a tremendous mentor but he was also my friend. Long after his term expired on the APAB, Bob would call or visit me in my office just to see how our preservation efforts were going. That is just how Bob was, he gave 100+ percent in everything he did. Whether through his work as an agricultural educator, grain farmer, iris growing enthusiast, world traveler, or civic leader, he poured his heart and soul into everything and he relished in telling everyone his stories. Oh, the stories Bob could tell, so vivid and so detailed you could almost see yourself in his shoes and experiencing what he did first-hand. During the 50th anniversary of the Conservation Tillage Event last July, Bob spoke with the same vigor, passion and drive when he was reflecting on what had been accomplished. He said *“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 and when I drive around the County and I see all the good growing crops and see all the land that is still in agriculture, is a very satisfying thing for me.”*



In Memoriam



Carolyn Van Der Weele
December 27, 1946 - May 2, 2019

Retired Administrative Assistant
for the Montgomery County
Extension Service.



Laura Ann Whirley
July 8, 1936 – May 26, 2019

Retired County Executive Director
Agricultural Stabilization and
Conservation Service now the
Farm Service Agency

It goes without saying that Bob will be greatly missed, it is rare these days to find individuals that have dedicated so much of their lives to such an important cause. I have often said, when you truly believe in something and have a passion for it, the passion will rub off and inspire others to do the same. Bob embodied this philosophy and inspired so many of us to be the best we can be in serving this special community. I can honestly say, that as *“I drive around the County and see all the land that is still in agriculture”* it is very satisfying for me and I will be forever indebted to the man that instilled this passion in me. Thank you, Bob! Bless you and now you can rest easy for your job here is now finally complete. Rest assured, we will do our very best to honor Bob’s legacy by putting into practice the numerous lessons that he taught us all.

MSCD Provides Comments on Maryland's Draft Phase III WIP

Maryland's Draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025 was available for review and public comment from April 12 through June 7, 2019. The MSCD Board of Supervisors submitted comments to the Maryland Department of the Environment to highlight the importance of adequate funding and equitable policy to support agriculture's goal of meeting a 51% reduction in N loading to the Bay by 2025. Specifically, we identified the importance of financial support to fully staff soil conservation districts, provide cost-share for private nutrient management plan development, and increase cost-share for BMPs on rented farmland. From a policy perspective, we identified inequities in nutrient trading regulations and a lack of sufficient credit in the Chesapeake Bay Model for farms under permanent preservation. The MSCD Board of Supervisors has carefully considered the realities of meeting WIP III goals and believes that agriculture is again willing and able to do its part. However, to support our agricultural community in the pursuit of this goal, the State must provide funding and regulatory support that is sufficient to meet the task at hand.

Fully Staff County Soil Conservation Districts: The MSCD is chronically understaffed for the workload in the County. In 2018, MSCD received 72 requests for assistance from farmers, with almost half still waiting for technical assistance as of April 2019. The primary bottleneck for processing these requests stems from having only 1 technician on staff to provide design and engineering assistance to our farmers. To streamline this portion of the process, MSCD would need to identify funding to hire an engineer and additional technical staff to work at the District office. At a minimum, the addition of an engineer to the MSCD staff would greatly enhance our ability to provide timely assistance to the farming community, provide support and oversight to our only technician and work towards achieving the WIP III goals.

Provide Cost-Share for Private Nutrient Management Plan Development: As we understand it, about 62% of farms in Maryland have a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). Even in counties where there are the University of Maryland Nutrient Management advisors, there is a waiting list for NMP development which is exacerbated by the State's eligibility requirement for cost-share participants to have a current NMP at the time of sign up for State cost-share assistance programs. While this is a reasonable requirement, the State has recently decided to allow participation in this year's Cover Crop program provided NMPs are brought up to current standards by November 13, 2019. One important consideration not specifically addressed within the WIP III plan is the private investment farmers will need to continue to make in implementing nutrient management and conservation on the lands they own and rent. Farmers have been expressing their anxiety concerning the current state of the agricultural economy. Low commodity prices, tariffs and loss marketing opportunities will probably result in lean times for producers. This could result in having less out-of-pocket money to cover farmer contributions for conservation and nutrient management expenses. We need to recognize that regardless of what programs and staff are funded to implement the WIP at the District level, if the farm economy is not healthy, our ability to provide assistance in implementing the WIP III goals will likely become a greater challenge. It is for these reasons that we are advocating cost share assistance for nutrient management to help with the out-of-pocket costs and to further incentivize plan development.

Increase Cost-Share for BMPs on Rented Farmland: It is estimated that between 16-25% of land that is rented by farmers have conservation practices in place. This, at least in part, is due to the short-term nature of rental agreements and a lack of understanding of the benefits of conservation by absentee landowners. Addressing this need for conservation has the potential to significantly increase the contributions that agriculture can make toward bay water quality goals. It is important, therefore, that resources be provided to study and fully understand the hurdles that are keeping conservation from being applied on rented farmland and potentially explore new ways to cost-share BMPs installed on rented land.

Provide Opportunities for Cost-Shared Agricultural BMPs to Earn Nutrient Trading Credits: Stormwater and wastewater treatment plants are now being lumped together in an "urban" sector with the acknowledgement that stormwater's shortcomings will be made up by achievements made by the wastewater sector. Since wastewater treatment plant upgrades are funded by public money (the "flush tax"), and the nutrient "credits" earned by wastewater treatment plants are being "traded" to the stormwater sector to address shortcomings, there is effective publicly funded nutrient trading occurring between the wastewater and stormwater sectors. If this is permissible, it should also be permissible for agriculture to earn and sell nutrient credits that are generated using public money from cost-share assistant programs. Currently under nutrient trading, farmers must achieve a baseline pollution load before being eligible to earn additional nutrient credits for reducing loads below the baseline.

MSCD Provides Comments on Maryland's Draft Phase III WIP continued

However, any load reductions achieved below the baseline using BMPs that were cost-shared by the government render those reductions ineligible for nutrient trading. This inequity in treatment between the agricultural and "urban" sectors must be rectified moving forward to allow cost-shared BMPs that generate nutrient credits to be eligible for nutrient trading programs.

Require That a Portion of Traded Agricultural Nutrient Credits Benefit the Agricultural Sector: Under nutrient trading, if agricultural credits are generated on individual farms, they can be sold to other sectors that are not meeting their water quality goals. This can occur even though the agricultural sector overall has not yet met its goals, so agriculture is effectively trading away its own nutrient reductions before meeting its own goal. We recommend a system in which other sectors purchase whole credits from agriculture, but only realize some portion of that credit (perhaps 75%), while the agricultural sector gains the balance of the credit (in this example, 25%).

Acknowledge the Benefit of the Agricultural Reserve and other Preserved Farmland: Farms under agricultural preservation easements have two benefits: 1) they will not contribute to future stormwater loading because they will never be developed to their fullest extent under zoning and the lack of impervious surfaces on preserved farms can act as a landscape level filter for adjacent municipalities, and 2) they are required to maintain current soil conservation and water quality plans with MSCD. These current and long-term benefits of both the Agricultural Reserve and preserved farms statewide are not reflected in the Chesapeake Bay Model and must receive credit in the future.



Save the Date!

The 2019 Montgomery Soil Conservation District's
Annual Cooperators Dinner
Wednesday, September 11, 2019

This year's venue is being hosted by Dr. Charles Mess
at his scenic Brooke Grove Farm in Olney

For More Information, Please Contact the District at 301-590-2855
for more details about this important event

Cover Crop Update – Spring 2019

Montgomery County Farmers reported 12,892 acres as part of the Cover Crop program in the fall of 2018. This number, though down from previous years, shows the true commitment by our cooperators to employ Best Management Practices on the farms they operate. The weather over the past year was extremely challenging to those in the agricultural industry. Wet weather in the spring of 2018 delayed planting and wet weather all last summer and fall delayed the harvest. For many, it was a challenge to plant any cover crops at all. Statewide, 362,000 acres were fall reported which was down 33,000 acres from the fall of 2018.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) added a Healthy Soil Biomass Cover Crop Pilot project at the tail end of last fall. This was an initiative to plant additional cover crop acres with the purpose of providing spring cover and vegetative biomass. The program allowed planting of cover crops between November 15 and December 1st using any method the farmer thought appropriate. A reimbursement payment would be based upon the vegetative standard performance. This spring those acres were visited by MDA staff to determine crop performance based on the amount of ground cover created by the plants. The fields were given a pass or fail rating based on the percent of coverage. Unfortunately, nearly 1/3 of the acreage planted failed to meet payment qualifications. The data collected seems to support the need to plant cover crops earlier in the fall to get an adequate stand. Secondly, incorporation of the seed into the soil is critical especially as the weather cools and the days shorten. Based on the spring results of the pilot, MDA will not be offering the program again in 2019. Alternatively, MDA has decided to add two new incentives to the Winter Cover Crop Program for 2019-2020. A \$15 per acre incentive will be available for those farmers who want to enroll 500 acres or less where the cover crop is suppressed after May 1st 2020. This incentive is being offered to help improve soil health and create additional plant biomass in the spring. MDA is also offering a \$10 per acre incentive for aerial applications of cover crop into standing corn by September 1st. This incentive is intended to promote early seed establishment as well as promote early contracting of aerial applicators so that they are not rushing to seed by the October 7th aerial application deadline.

Applications for the 2019-2020 Cover Crop Program will be accepted at the District from June 21st until July 17th. You must have a current nutrient management plan to be able to participate. A nutrient management certification form signed by your nutrient management consultant is required. If you do not have a current plan, you will have until November 13th, 2019 to complete one.

Cover Crop News

MDA Traditional Cover Crop and District Cover Crop Programs

The 2019-2020 Cover Crop Program Signup begins **June 21, 2019** and runs through **July 17, 2019**.

To be eligible, a Nutrient Management Certification form Detailing the current status of your NMP must **be submitted at time of application**

If **not submitted**, the District can accept an application; however a Current Nutrient Management Certification form detailing the current status of your NMP **must be submitted by November 13, 2019** to remain eligible for this year's program

NEW for 2019!

Extended Season Cover Crop Incentive

- Provides a \$15.00 per acre payment Payment for delaying Kill Down until **May 1st** on traditional cover crop program acres.
- Must meet all other Cover Crop Program Requirements.
- Must notify the District by **April 15, 2020** of the fields intended for delayed Kill Down.
- A Maximum of 500 acres can be enrolled per applicant.
- Cannot Plant Crops into stand before **May 1, 2020**.

For more information, Please contact the District at 301-590-2855

18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD
20855

**MONTGOMERY SOIL
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**

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

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The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status.