

District Digest

Winter 2024

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FREDERICK COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

92 Thomas Johnson Drive
Suite 230
Frederick, MD 21702

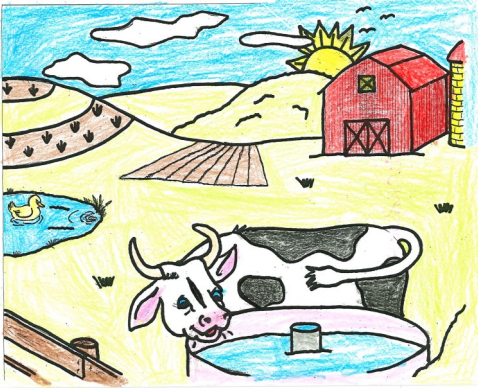
Phone: (301)-695-2803 Ext. 3
Email: soil.conservaion@comcast.net
Fcscd.com

2024 SOIL SMART FARM TOUR

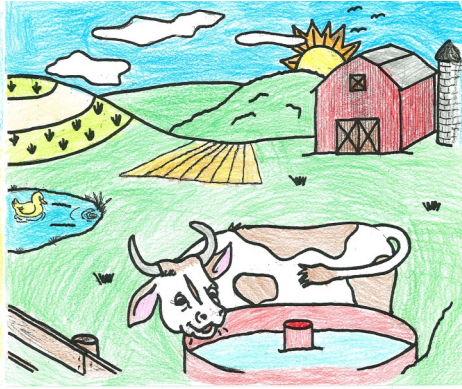
On September 5th local and state legislators, including County Executive, Jessica Fitzwater, and many others joined the SCD, Frederick County Farm Bureau, and Horizon Farm Credit to tour four farms that represent the agricultural diversity throughout Frederick County. This is the fourth year the tour was offered. The tour started in Mount Airy with a stop at Jarrod and Becky Burrall's farm. The Burralls spoke about their cattle and grain operation and efforts to incorporate a value-added farm stand to make local beef available to the community. The group then made their way to Gaver Farm where Lisa Gaver provided a tour of the operation with a wagon ride and discussed agritourism and the educational benefit to the community. The next stop on the tour was Paradise Stables. Elizabeth Tate spoke about Common Ground, a non-profit that brings the healing power of horses to veterans and others in the community who have suffered trauma. The final stop of the day was Hedgeapple Farm where Chris Zook, the farm manager, spoke about rotational grazing on their beef cow/calf operation. It was a great day spent discussing local agriculture and we look forward to next year's tour.



2024 COLORING CONTEST WINNERS



1st Place– Class A, Kindergarten & 1st Grades: Raylynn H. from Woodsboro Elementary.



1st Place– Class B, 2nd & 3rd Grades: Adaline H. from Woodsboro Elementary



1st Place– Class C, 4th & 5th Grades: Millie M. from New Midway Elementary

Frederick County elementary school students demonstrated their artistic prowess through their submissions for the annual Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) coloring contest. We greatly appreciate the Johnsville Ruritan for judging the entries. Congratulations to the first place entries!

2024 GEORGE A. NICHOLSON, SR. MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Above L-R: Steve Leatherman, Robert Myers, John Falkenstein, Diane Flickinger, Benjamin Sowers, 2024 Scholarship Winner– Caroline Clark, Millard Shafer, and Heather Hutchinson.

Please join us in congratulating this years George A. Nicholson, Sr. Memorial Scholarship winners, Caroline Clark and Tate Ondrik.

Caroline Clark is a 2024 graduate of Catoclin High School and in her freshman year at the University of MD.

Tate Ondrik (not pictured) is a 2024 graduate of Linganore High School and a freshman at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

ENVIROTHON

The Frederick County Envirothon was held on April 23rd at the Cunningham Falls State Park- Manor Area. Twenty-two teams competed to test their knowledge in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a fifth issue that changes each year. This years fifth issue was “renewable energy for a sustainable future”. Help us in congratulating the following winners:

- 1st Place: “Blue Herons” from Brunswick High School
- 2nd Place: “Rose Mallow” from Urbana High School
- 3rd Place: “Planet Pals” from Gov. Thomas Johnson High School

The Blue Herons went on to place 9th at the State Envirothon held in July at Mount Saint Mary’s University.



Pictured Above: 1st Place Team, “Blue Herons”, from Brunswick High School

The Great Frederick Fair

Staff and board members of the Soil Conservation District interacted with more than 4,000 Frederick County School students at The Great Frederick Fair. The SCD, along with other organizations, hosts a booth in the City Streets Country Roads building. The focus of our booth is soil health and we use a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the differences in soils that are heavily tilled vs. no-tilled.



HAPPY RETIREMENT!

After 20 years of service, Dave Huffer retired in August. In the fall months, you can find him at Jumbo's Pumpkin Patch. Please join us in congratulating him on a great career!

MACS Grants Expanded

The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share Program (MACS) announced that there is now cost share funding available for small scale equine and livestock operations with at least 1,000 lbs of livestock. Past participation was limited to operations with 8,000 or more pounds of livestock

Examples of qualifying conservation practices that benefit equine and livestock operations include:

- Watering facilities
- Pasture management
- Animal waste storage structures
- Heavy use area protection
- Roof runoff structures
- Stream exclusion fencing
- Interior pasture fencing

Cost share for stream exclusion fencing is at the full approved rate. Cost share for all other practices is based on animal units (1,000 lbs of livestock= 1 animal unit) and provided at a reduced rate. For more information please contact the Soil Conservation District office.



CONSERVATION BUFFER INITIATIVE

Turn marginal land next to streams or floodplains into a valuable asset for both your farm and local water quality with the Conservation Buffer Initiative. Entering its fifth year, Maryland’s Conservation Buffer Initiative provides farmers with attractive incentive payments to plant buffers next to streams to improve water quality and support the state’s climate goals. Three types of buffers are eligible for funding : forest buffers planted next to waterways, grass buffers planted next to waterways or field ditches, and watercourse access control areas adjacent to pastures.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Applications reviewed on a first come-first served basis based on availability of funding or until March 31, 2025
- Payment rates range from \$500 per acre for existing grass buffers to a maximum of \$4,500 per acre to install a riparian forest buffer with pasture fencing
- Mowing and hay harvesting are allowed; nutrient applications are not
- Farmers receive 75% of the project cost upfront and the remaining 25% after verification of planting for enrolled land
- An extra one-time bonus payment of \$1,000/acre for enrolled forest buffers is offered
- Annual maintenance payments are available for forest buffers during the first five years
- Contracts are for 5 or 10 years, dependent of practice
- The Soil Conservation District can provide free technical assistance to get your buffer installed
- All work must be completed within one year of the agreement’s signing date
- Additional program requirements can be found at https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/conservation-buffer-initiative.aspx or by contacting the Soil Conservation District

Maryland’s 2024-2025 Conservation Buffer Initiative					
PRACTICE NAME	RI PRACTICE CODE	ADJACENT LAND USE	PAYMENT (NEW OR IMPROVED)	PAYMENT (EXISTING)	AGREEMENT TERM IN YEARS
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Narrow Grass 10 to 34 ft. width	RI-4a	Pasture	\$1,500/acre	None	5
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Grass 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-5	Pasture	\$2,500/acre	None	5
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Trees 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-6	Pasture	\$4,500/acre + \$1,000/acre bonus	None	10
Grass Buffer on Watercourse Narrow 10-34 ft. width	RI-7	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$1,000/acre	\$500/acre	5
Grass Buffer on Watercourse 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-8	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$2,000/acre	\$500/acre	5
Forest Buffer on Watercourse (Trees) 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-10	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$4,000/acre + \$1,000/acre bonus	None	10

Funding for Maryland’s Conservation Buffer Initiative is provided by the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund and the Environmental Protection Agency.

COVER CROP

The 2023-2024 Cover Crop Program finished up with Frederick County farmers planting around 36,000 acres of cover crops. Applications for the 2024-2025 cycle opened on June 21st and closed on July 17th.

Changes this year to the Cover Crop Program:

- The base payment for all planting methods is now \$50/acre
- Early planting incentive (planting on or before October 10th) increased to \$25/acre
- Planting between October 11th and November 5th incentive increased to \$10/acre
- Late planted cover crop (planted between November 6th and November 15th) decreased to \$40/acre
- Delayed termination incentive (termination after May 1st) has been removed from this year's program
- Fall non-poultry manure application onto established cover crops is allowed if the following criteria is met:
 - Cover crop must be planted by October 1st
 - Manure can not be applied until November 1st
 - No manure application after December 15th
 - Fields will be eligible for the reduced payment of \$40/acre

With lots of changes happening this year to the Cover Crop program, please don't hesitate to reach out to our office with any questions you may have.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- Cover crops planted between 11/6/2024 and 11/15/2024 can not be terminated until 5/1/2025
- Terminate cover crops between 3/1/25 and 6/1/25.
- Report termination to the SCD within two weeks of termination and no later than June 3, 2025.



Manure Transport Program

The Manure Transport Program helps cover the cost of injecting manure and/or transporting manure to farms with low phosphorus fields. To qualify for transport assistance, manure must be transported more than one mile from the sending source. There is no distance requirement for manure injection. As with all cost-share programs, you must have a current nutrient management plan.

All fall manure applications must be completed by December 15, 2024. Claims for payment must be submitted to the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share (MACS) office by January 15, 2025.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Cost share grants to transport dairy and livestock manure to qualifying fields cover up to 87.5% of eligible costs
- Farmers can receive up to \$45/acre for costs associated with injecting liquid manure (Poultry manure is not eligible)
- Cost-share grants pay up to 87.5% of all eligible costs.
- Payment rates are based on the transport distance and type of manure, either liquid or solid
- Receiving farm fields are required to have a Maryland soil phosphorus Fertility Index Value (FIV) below 101
- Manure must be transported more than 1 mile from the sending source
- Only operations receiving the manure may apply for transport grants
- Manure must be applied to crops or hay fields containing less than 25 percent legumes
- Grants to transport dairy and livestock manure are based on the following maximum application rates: 6,000 gallons per acre for liquid/slurry manure or 10 tons per acre for solid/semi-solid manure

Per a memo from MDA sent to the SCD on June 27, 2024, all injection claims received after July 1, 2024, will be paid based on actual invoiced costs, not to exceed \$45 per acre. Dragline pumping subtotals on all invoices are considered transport costs (moving the manure from the source to the field). Pumping, manure loading, agitation, etc. are considered inherent to the management system and are not eligible for transport/injection cost-share. They will be removed from the invoice total before calculating eligible payments.

For additional information regarding the Manure Transport Program, please contact Alan Masters, the Program Administrator, at (410)-841-5871.

NRCS OPPORTUNITIES!



Grazed cover cops on cropland—Photo Credit, Tim Brecker



Planting Green—Photo Credit, Cover Crop Strategies

Interested in any of the following NEW practices?

- ◇ Grazing on cropland
- ◇ Planting green into no-till crop ground
- ◇ Multi-species cover crops (rates and species outside traditional MDA programs)
- ◇ Soil carbon amendment (compost or biochar)
- ◇ Transitioning to organic
- ◇ Silvopasture
- ◇ AND MORE!

How to learn more? **Join us at our Soil Health Event on February 12th, 2025!**

2024 FCSCD COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Deer Run Farm— The Stewart Family

The Stewart Family of Deer Run Farm is recognized for their enduring commitment to soil conservation and natural resource stewardship. Over the past decade, in partnership with NRCS, MDA, and the Frederick County Soil Conservation District, the Stewarts have worked tirelessly to protect the farm's soil, water, and other critical resources. They have embraced soil health principles and implemented best management practices, including planting cover crops, rotating diverse crops, maintaining a strict no-tillage approach for row crops, optimizing fertilizer use, and utilizing adaptive grazing strategies on their perennial pastures. The Stewart's outstanding conservation efforts and their ongoing dedication to protecting natural resources are commendable and provide environmental benefits far beyond the farm gates. Please help us recognize them for all of their conservation efforts!





HEALTHY SOILS COMPETITIVE FUND

The Maryland Department of Agriculture Healthy Soils Program will accept applications from December 2, 2024– March 7, 2025

Do you have an innovative conservation idea for your farm? The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will provide financial assistance to qualifying farmers who want to adopt a range of soil health or agroforestry practices.

How much money is available? This competitive grant program awards selected applications with up to \$50,000 to support 3 years of enhanced soil health practices.

When can you apply? MDA will accept applications through March 7, 2025. Grant recipients will be announced by May 30, 2025. You must provide proof of compliance with Maryland’s Nutrient Management requirements.

Who is eligible for funds? Individual farmers or groups of farmers operating in Maryland, and individuals or organizations conducting research with farmers in Maryland are eligible.

What types of projects are funded?

- Cover crops
- Conservation tillage
- Pasture and hay planting
- Conservation cover
- Critical area planting
- Conservation crop rotation
- Nutrient management
- Integrated pest management
- Prescribed grazing
- Soil carbon amendment
- Alley cropping
- Hedgerow planting
- Silvopasture
- Tree and shrub establishment
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt establishment

There are no minimum or maximum acreage requirements and farm size is not a consideration for project selection. If selected, funds may not be used to cover overhead or indirect costs. Funds may be used to support implementation of conservation practices, cover staff and administrative time for organizations that provide technical support to producers, cover research costs, or purchase/rent equipment that supports the adoption of soil health practices.

Questions?

Contact **Nick Miller**, Healthy Soils Program Specialist

Phone: (410)841-5866

Email: Nicholas.Miller2@maryland.gov



Scan the QR codes with your mobile device to visit the website or go to: bit.ly/MDAHealthySoil

2025 Digging Deeper into Soil Health!

Mark your calendars to join us for our fourth annual Digging Deeper into Soil Health day on February 12th, 2025! We have moved venues and we will be hosting our soil health day at New Midway Volunteer Fire Company. Joining us this year as our speaker is Luke Jones with Understand Ag.

Luke resides in West Central Illinois with his family where his current operation includes importing and raising Australian White Sheep as well as row cropping.

We look forward to welcoming Luke in February! Registration for our fourth annual Digging Deeper into Soil Health will be coming soon!



**92 Thomas Johnson Drive, Suite 230
Frederick, MD 21702**



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