

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

Calendar

MDA Enhanced Conservation Buffer Program
sign up January 10 – February 18th
call 301-590-2855 for more information

Central Maryland Forage Conference,
January 19th For more information email
kellyn@umd.edu

Delmarva Soil Summit – Salisbury,
MD February 7-8 – For More Information
<https://delmarvasoilsummit.com/>

Nutrient Management Plan Writing Classes:
Washington County Extension Office
January 26 and 28, 2022, Exam on
February 9th. For more information and to
register (umd.edu/washingtonFTC22).

2022 Agronomy Update, February 23, 2022,
Urbana Fire Hall For more information email
kellyn@umd.edu

Annual Nutrient Management Implementation
Report (AIR) due March 1st to MDA

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Applications Due by April 2nd
Contact Charlotte Brewster at
charlotte.brewster@usda.gov

MSCD Office Closures
Martin Luther King Birthday – January 17th
Presidents Day – February 21st



Montgomery Conservation Connection



Montgomery
SCD

January 2022

The District Welcomes New State Conservation Planners

In December, Kathleen Sigwart and Ibraheem Jastaniah joined the District team working as Resource Conservation Planners employed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Kathleen attended Seton Keough High School in Baltimore, graduating in 2013, before leaving to attend Limestone College in Gaffney, South Carolina. Kathleen graduated Cum Laude from Limestone with a dual major in History/ Pre-law and Biology and was a member of the History and Athletic Honor Society. She was a 4-year starter for Limestone's Field Hockey team, being named the Conference Defensive Player of the Year

in 2015 and a National Field Hockey All-American in 2016. During her college career, Kathleen was able to travel to Australia and multiple countries in Europe where she played field hockey and had the opportunity to visit and experiencing the sights and sounds of another Country. After graduating from Limestone in 2018, Kathleen went on to obtain a Masters Degree in Environmental Biology from Hood College in Frederick.

Prior to joining the MDA and District team, Kathleen worked for Anthony & Sylvan pools in multiple roles, which included the warranty and construction departments. In her free time, Kathleen coach's varsity field hockey at Arundel High School in Gambrills, where her team recently won the 3A State Title. She also enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time with her family. Kathleen understands the important role farmers play as a partner in the Chesapeake restoration effort and is very anxious to get started by helping our local farmers with their conservation planning needs. Please join with us by welcoming Kathleen to our team and wishing her success in her new position.



*Ibraheem Jastaniah,
MDA Resource Conservation Planner*

Ibraheem our newest team member is interested in sustainable farming practices that began during his sophomore year at UW-Madison while he volunteered at the FH King student run farm. Those experiences and meaningful relationships developed with the land and the community encouraged him to pursue a degree in Environmental Science. To supplement his education, Ibraheem lived and worked on a 10-acre organic vegetable farm in Applegate, Oregon. Having had such diverse experiences both in and outside of class, Ibraheem understands the hard work required of farmers in providing valuable resources for the community, and wishes to sustain these valuable resources by aiding them in developing their conservation plans. When not at work, Ibraheem loves to spend time gardening and

cooking with his wife and playing with his two beautiful young daughters. We are delighted to have two great resources to help our farmers, please join with us in welcoming both Kathleen and Ibraheem.



*Kathleen Sigwart
MDA Resource Conservation Planner*

Happy Trails to Chris Zawitoski: NRCS-RC&D Soil Conservation Technician



*Chris Zawitoski
MDA Soil Conservation Associate II
Frederick SCD*

For the past 18 months, Chris Zawitoski has been serving Montgomery County's Agricultural Community as the NRCS-RC&D Soil Conservation Technician for both Montgomery and Howard District Offices.

On December 1, 2021, Chris started a new position with the Maryland Department of Agriculture as a Soil Conservation Associate II where he has been assigned to help farmers in the Frederick Soil Conservation District Office. Chris came to our District under a grant funded contractual position with the Southern Maryland RC&D. During Chris' tenure, he designed numerous conservation best management practices and provided his assistance to many District sponsored conservation educational outreach events. Montgomery County's loss is certainly Frederick County's gain. While we will miss his contributions in our office and to the farm community, the opportunity provided by MDA will help him expand his

career goals to further help our farmers meet the WIP III objectives. We know many of our farmers farm in Frederick County so it's likely you will get to work with Chris again. Thank you, Chris for working so hard in helping our farmers, we wish you nothing but the best in your new role with MDA at the Frederick SCD Office!



Contemplating Building a Barn or other Agricultural Structure?

The District often fields questions from County residents about permitting and other requirements for constructing agricultural structures on their land. The first question often asked is, "Do I need a permit to build my structure?" Other questions include "Do I need to comply with Erosion & Sediment Control and Stormwater Management requirements?" We try to provide some general information to guide farmers as to what is required for these structures.

"Do I need a building permit?"

The answer to this question is maybe. If your land is agriculturally zoned and receiving an agricultural use assessment, you can erect an agricultural structure without the need to secure a building permit from the County. While being ag zoned and ag assessed will exempt you from the building permit process, any amenities added to the structure would require additional permits from the County (i.e. electrical permit for adding electricity to your ag structure.). If your lands are assessed for anything other than agriculture, you would need to secure a building permit from the County as well as comply with any other requirements including but not limited to forest conservation.

"Is my land disturbance subject to Erosion & Sediment Control and Stormwater Management?"

The short answer is yes, if the limits of the land disturbance will exceed 5,000 square feet or you import more than 100 cubic yards of earthen materials. There could be additional requirements if the removal of vegetation is required to construct the structure. Under State Law for disturbances under 43,560 square feet, the District can assist you in meeting the requirements of the State Erosion and Sediment Control Law by developing a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan that incorporates the disturbance activity in the plan. If the land disturbance for the structure exceeds 43,560 square feet, a formal erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by the County's Department of Permitting Services.

Stormwater Management

If the land disturbance for the agricultural structure exceeds 5,000 square feet or involves the importation of more than 100 cubic yards of earthen materials, then the State Law also requires

Contemplating Building a Barn or other Agricultural Structure?.....continued

the project to meet Stormwater Management requirements. If the District determines that the disturbance exceeds the 5,000 sq ft or 100 cubic yards of earthen material, then the District will inform the landowner/operator to contact the County's Department of Permitting Services (DPS) to coordinate the review and approval of the project's stormwater management plan. Once the plan is approved by the County DPS, the District can assist with the implementation of the Stormwater Management Plan.

We understand that these matters can be somewhat confusing, and it is why we always recommend that you contact the District before undertaking any land disturbance project. We are always happy to answer any questions you may have. Contact us at 301-590-2855.

Nutrient Management-Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) Due March 1st

Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) documenting nutrient applications for calendar year 2021 are due to the Maryland Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Program by March 1, 2022.

This is the 2nd year that farmers will have the option to file their AIRs electronically using the Maryland OneStop portal. The e-filing option became available on January 11, 2021. Please visit www.mda.maryland.gov to see a short explanation on how to file an Electronic AIR. The Maryland OneStop portal provides the user the ability to access the Electronic AIR form at www.onestop.md.gov. From the home page, you can select the Maryland Department of Agriculture by using the search feature to browse by agency. If you are new to the Electronic AIR filing system, you will need to register as a new user on the website.

A nice feature of the electronic filing option is that the electronic forms look like the paper forms you may be accustomed to completing. All the same information will need to be completed. There will be a box for electronic signature at the end. Do not forget to sign prior to submittal. A consultant may complete the forms for you however there is a special signature page if this occurs.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is encouraging all farmers to use the online portal if possible. Electronic submission will help prevent forms being lost in the mail and will provide an instant record of submittal. Electronic submission will also allow the agency to better track and record the data reported in the forms. For farmers who want to continue to submit paper reports, PDFs will be uploaded to the www.mda.maryland.gov website early in January.

Paper reports can be completed as usual and returned to the regional office. Please remember to include the account identification numbers of any parcels you picked up or lost in 2021. It is important to keep the list of account identification numbers up to date so that the acres in your plan are accurate. If you have questions regarding the form or how to complete it, you should contact your nutrient management planner or the nutrient management regional specialist for your area. For Anne Arundel, Howard and Montgomery Counties, please contact Kenny Favorite, Nutrient Management Specialist at kenny.favorite@maryland.gov or by telephone: 410-507-4811.

Important Nutrient Management Dates 2022

Winter Applications (December 16 - February 28 of the following year) EMERGENCY PROVISION

- Liquid manure only (operations w/ 50 > animal units). Solid manure must be stacked and spread later. Request for Emergency Waiver direct to NMP by calling 410-841-5959 or contact Regional Nutrient Management specialist.
- Application shall be made to existing vegetative cover maintained as such until March 1
- Application prohibited within 100' of surface waters, on slopes > 7 %, soil is saturated, ground is covered with > 1" snow or ground hard frozen > 2".

Spring / Summer Applications (March 1-September 9)

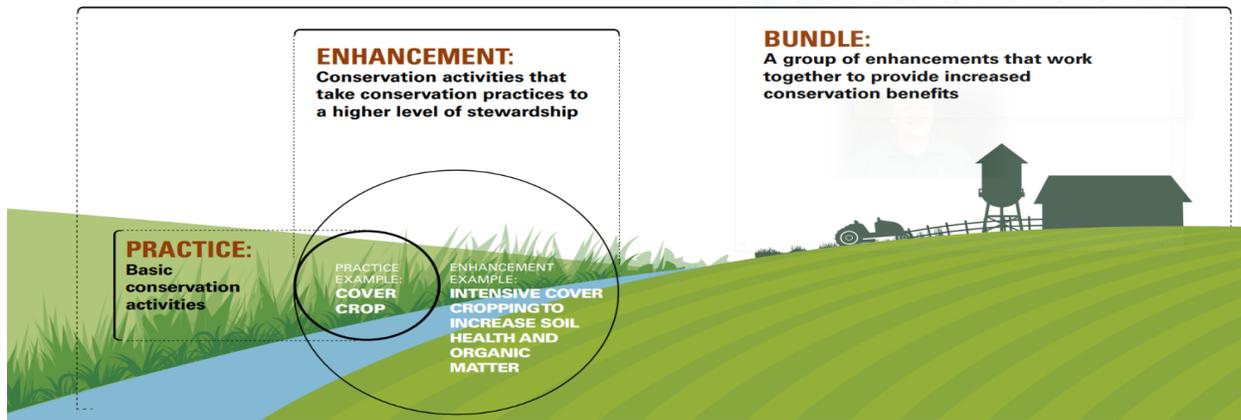
- Inject or incorporate within 48 hours, except those operations managed to obtain the benefits of no-till farming. Application prohibited when soil is saturated, ground is covered with snow > 1" or ground hard frozen > 2". MDA reserves the right to require incorporation of organic nutrients on a case-by-case basis

NRCS Announces April 2nd Application Deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program

If you are a farmer, rancher, or forester who works to enhance natural resources and strengthen environmental protection on your working land, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provides a unique opportunity for you to be rewarded for your conservation efforts.

Montgomery County farmers and forest landowners interested in earning payments for actively managing and expanding conservation activities like prescribed grazing, enhanced nutrient management, and mixed species cover crops have until April 2nd to be considered for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funding in fiscal year 2022.

Additional conservation activities available through CSP include soil health planning, building soil organic matter through crop rotations and practices that help producers adapt to or mitigate impacts of changing weather conditions. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications and new soil amendments to improve water quality.



A Simple Diagram to show how the Conservation Stewardship Program can take conservation efforts to the next level!

Landowners can contact our local NRCS office at 301-590-2855 or by email charlotte.brewster@usda.gov to apply. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, please call ahead to schedule an appointment. Please be advised that virtual appointments may be necessary. While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to our office by April 2 to ensure their applications are considered for fiscal year 2022 funding. For more information about conservation planning and programs, contact our office or visit www.md.nrcs.usda.gov.



Cover Crop Program Remains a District Program Priority Despite Challenges: Winter/Spring Update 2022

Last fall Montgomery County Farmers reported approximately 15,000 acres as part of the State Cover Crop program. This number is a 2,600 acre decrease from the fall of 2020. Planting conditions were ideal for much of the fall however harvest was slowed a few times by wet weather. The Maryland Department of Agriculture extended the final planting date until November 12th to allow for one extra week of planting.

Looking ahead to this spring, cover crop termination may not begin until March 1st. If your goal is to delay termination for soil health purposes and qualify for the delayed termination incentive, you must wait until May 1st. As a reminder, spring application of nutrients must not occur prior to March 1st for acres enrolled in the Maryland Department of Agriculture Cover Crop Program. Spring certification of

Continued on next page

Cover Crop Program Remains a District Program Priority Despite Challenges: ..continued

cover crop kill-down or harvest must be submitted to your local Soil Conservation District by June 2nd. Options for end of winter suppression include green chopping (for on farm use only), plowing under, or use of a burn-down herbicide. Grazing of cover crops after they are well established is allowed however grazing is not an acceptable spring termination method. Green planting or planting through a living cover crop that is intended for the delayed suppression incentive is not allowed. The field will however be eligible for the base cover crop payment after suppression.

Thank you to all who participate in the Cover Crop Program. The nutrient reduction credits gained from this best management practice are a critical component for the agricultural sector to reach the 2025 Chesapeake Bay reduction goals. As in years past, commodity cover crop acres harvested in Montgomery County will be eligible for the Water Quality Incentive Program reimbursement. While no longer eligible for reimbursement through the Maryland Department of Agriculture program, these acres do benefit water quality and help Montgomery County with the nutrient reductions required by the agricultural sector.

Total winter cover crop acres have been down over the past two years. This could be due to several factors including weather, seed cost, availability of agricultural parts and products. Timing is also a big factor. If farmers can't get the crops out of the fields due to the mills being backed up, lack of storage, or lack of help, then cover crops won't be planted. Cover Crop acres are an important tool for removing nutrients from the Chesapeake Bay. Cover crops are also an important tool for improving soil organic matter, microbial activity, infiltration, and reduced compaction. Farmers are exploring the benefits of multi-species cover crops to add more diversity to the field. For additional cover crop benefits, visit <https://agmr.umd.edu/multi-species-cover-crops>

State Conservation Buffer Initiative A Go for a 2nd Year!

For the second year, the Maryland Department of Agriculture is promoting a Conservation Buffer Initiative for Maryland. This pilot program provides a new funding option for farmers who want to plant streamside buffers on their farms to improve the health of local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland's Conservation Buffer Initiative offers many features that farmers have asked for. These include **attractive incentive payments**, a **buffer option for field ditches**, **more flexible site management**, and **shorter contract terms**.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Three types of buffers are eligible for funding and free technical assistance under this pilot: **forest buffers** planted next to waterways, **grass buffers** planted next to waterways *or* field ditches, and **watercourse access control areas** adjacent to pastures. Here's how the program works:

Farmers receive a one-time payment for enrolled land with 75% paid when the contract is executed and 25% paid when the project is completed. Payment rates range from **\$500/acre for an existing grass buffer** to a maximum of **\$4,500/acre to install a riparian forest** buffer with fencing. Mowing and hay harvesting are allowed; however nutrient applications are not. Contracts are for 5 or 10 years and the Soil Conservation District can provide free technical assistance to get your buffer installed.

All work must be completed by **June 30, 2023**. Financial assistance is also available to install deer fencing next to grass buffers. Other features include a buffer option for field ditches, flexible site management, and shorter contract terms. Plant the buffer that works for you.

How to Apply for the MDA Grant? You'll find everything you need on MDA's website including payment options, application forms, and eligibility criteria ([bit.ly/MDA Buffer](http://bit.ly/MDA_Buffer)). You can email your application or send it through the mail. **Applications are accepted January 10-February 18, 2022**. If you need help, you can reach out to us at the District for more information or assistance.

Free Horse Manure Analysis

This Winter, The Montgomery Soil Conservation District is teaming up with the University of Maryland Extension in a study of the nutrient content of horse manure and bedding from a large cross-section of equine operations in Montgomery County. This study aims to limit external factors and establish if bedding types and supplements significantly affect the nutrient content of equine manure.

District and University Extension Staff will take the samples and cover the laboratory costs. Participating operations will receive a copy of their manure analysis once the results are analyzed. Individual samples will be given a unique ID to protect the identity of participants and participants will be informed a week prior to the sampling date, which will be in February 2022.

Participating operations must have equines and equine waste products housed on-site either temporarily or as part of a compost system. The manure pile that is sampled must be composed primarily of equine bedding and/or manure. Participants will be asked to supply the following information:

- Are horses given supplements as part of daily feeding?** Y N
(Optional) Type of supplement: _____
- Are stalls picked/screened or given a full clean-out?** Y N
- What type of bedding is used?** None Sawdust Shavings Other: _____
- Address of Manure Pile:** _____
- Contact Email / Phone number:** _____

If you would prefer to sign up for the program and answer these questions over the phone you may contact the Travis Gorleski, District Equine Conservationist at 301-590-2832. Information may also be emailed to travis.gorleski@montgomerycountymd.gov or mailed to:

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD 20855-1421

Thank you in advance to everyone participating in this study, and to The Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) for providing the grant to the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, which will help to cover laboratory fees and fuel costs.

2020 Maryland WIP Progress: Are We on Track for 2025?

In December, the Maryland Department of the Environment, as a part of Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) provided an update on Maryland's Phase III WIP implementation progress.

An updated 2020 story map is accessible at the following link (storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/234759335b7249d88442a7bff53a8784), which demonstrates that Maryland is attaining 84% of its 2025 nitrogen reduction goal and 96% of its phosphorus reduction goal. With additional reductions needed to meet the challenges of climate change, Conowingo, and growth,

Maryland will continue to seek out new strategies towards maintaining the progress it's made so far. Two-year milestones, due in January of each even-numbered year, are posted at mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Pages/milestones.aspx



Solar Energy Generation and Agricultural Operations: Is this a feasible energy alternative for your farm?

As our country continues to assess the impacts of climate change, Montgomery County, Maryland is taking a more proactive approach by establishing a County goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Part of this approach includes expanding the use of solar powered facilities throughout the County, including lands that are being used for agricultural purposes. Solar power is nothing new. It has been discussed as an alternative power source for the bulk of the last century, and countless billions of dollars have gone into research and development of the Solar Energy Industry over the last twenty years.

While some of the same problems that existed seventy years ago are still present today, others have largely been overcome by advances in the process through which solar panels, now more commonly referred to in the industry as Photo-voltaic arrays (PVAs), are produced. For example, the silicon crystals used in the PVAs are now grown in labs, where they are specially formulated to increase efficiency and productive lifespan.

Likewise, the PVA manufacturing and installation industry is now larger and more diverse than ever before. With so many companies now competing, free market forces have started to drive the price of solar installation down considerably, with competitive terms that in some cases will be comparable or less than the rate customers are currently paying for their electricity. Here is a list of just some of the companies currently installing solar systems in the County:

Solar Energy Company	Contact Person	Contact Information
SGC Power Development	Abe Bennett	abe.bennett@sgc-power.com
Chaberton Energy	Stefano Ratti	Stefano@chaberton.com , Keith.Walker@chaberton.com
Community Energy	Keith George	570-332-4352
Distributed Solar Operations LLC		518.949.0165
CI Renewables	Josh Smith	Josh.Smith@CIRenew.com
Turning Point Energy	Marshall Lornac	mloranc@tpoint-e.com
Turning Point Energy	Frances Yuhas	fyuhas@tpoint-e.com
Sunpower	Kabir Shohel	kabir.shohel@sunpowercorp.com
Solar Gaines	Tom Gaines	info@solargaines.com
CI Renewables	Thomas Lynch	973-713-6017
Turning Point Energy	Frances Yuhas	fyuhas@tpoint-e.com

There are still some obstacles to consider. Ground-mounted PVAs, typically the most affordable, can consume a lot of acreage. In addition, not all sites are suitable; For example, the power lines running along some local roads cannot support certain PVA facilities. Something else to consider, though most solar installation companies will cover damage from a single power surge, repeated power surges can cause significant damage to a system.

This is not to say that solar might not be a sensible – and even profitable investment for your farm. While the Montgomery Soil Conservation District does not advocate for one solar company over another, or the type of solar powered facility that may be appropriate for your operation, we do encourage all our cooperators to not dismiss it as an option before looking more into the costs and benefits of different installation setups. Our District staff can be available to help evaluate the applicability of solar for your operation and aid in your decision making (costs vs benefits) to see if solar aided energy generation makes the most sense for your operational needs.

Please note that permits may be required from the County if land is disturbed during the installation process of a PVA. Also, stormwater management planning may be required for PVAs that encompass an area 5,000 square feet or larger. The solar companies and County Department of Permitting Services should be able to answer specific questions you might have on these specific topics.

18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD
20855

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

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