

## EQUINE FALL PASTURE RENOVATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) is pleased to introduce the 2008 Equine Fall Pasture Renovation Incentive Program. This program uses incentive payments to promote fall pasture renovation for equine operations. Varying rates will be paid for pasture renovation practices such as no-till seeding, aeration, weed control and rotational grazing.

To qualify for the program, applicants must have an approved soil conservation and water quality plan and a nutrient management plan for the parcel of land, and the property must be located in Montgomery County. The conservation plan will provide the recommendations for seeding and establishing the pasture according to the NRCS Pasture and Hayland Planting Standard. The nutrient management plan will provide the fertilizer recommendations for the specific area to be renovated. **The program sign-up dates are June 16<sup>th</sup> thru August 1<sup>st</sup>.**



*A no-till drill renovating an equine pasture field.*

Late summer/early fall (August – October) is the best time to renovate a pasture. Lower weed competition, favorable weather conditions and forage plant physiology gives the new seedling a better chance for establishment and survival. By the end of summer, over grazed pastures can be depleted of vegetation as well as nutrients. This is the main reason to renovate the pasture at this time. The pasture seed has the best chance to germinate and establish in the fall due to less weed competition and maximized nutrient uptake. In the spring, the nutrient uptake supports leaf development rather than root

development. The process is reversed in the fall. A well-developed root system provides longevity and productivity to the pasture field.

To promote root development and greater water infiltration, this program will encourage the use of an aerator. The aerator produces a cavity in the soil surface that fractures the compacted soil, and allows water to infiltrate into the root zone.

To allow for the pasture seeding to develop into mature productive forage, the practice of rotational grazing should be implemented. **The renovated pasture must be fallow for six to eight months following the renovation.** This period is the most crucial time for the establishment of the pasture. Most pasture renovations fail because the grass was not allowed to establish and mature before being grazed.

To control weed competition in the spring, one herbicide application will be allowed under the Incentive Program. Since the field will not be in use, the opportunities for achieving the highest weed control can be realized. Applying the proper herbicide at the correct time is important for controlling specific weeds. Weed control can be a major factor in determining the success of a pasture renovation project.

The process for applying is simple. Come to the MSCD office and fill out an application. Mr. Eddie Franceschi will help you complete the application and discuss your options for implementing the various practices. The MSCD has compiled a list of contractors that will do pasture renovation according to the NRCS Pasture and Hayland Planting Standard. You also have the option of doing the planting yourself by renting the equipment from rental suppliers. Participants will be paid an incentive rate per acre based on the practices they complete.

**COVER CROP PROGRAM  
Sign-up Scheduled for June 23-  
July 8<sup>th</sup>!!!! Cost-Share rates up  
to \$75 per-acre for specific  
practices and crops.**

(See next page.)

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY EQUINE SEMINAR

On April 30, 2008, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District and Montgomery County Cooperative Extension held a spring Equine Seminar at Good Choice Farm in Clarksburg, Maryland. The owners and operators of the farm, Mr. Tim McGrath and Ms. Kevin Bowie, graciously hosted more than twenty people for the evening. The theme of this seminar was pasture management on horse farms, and some valuable lessons were learned from the event.

Approximately two months before the seminar, at the beginning of March, employees of the Soil Conservation District and Cooperative Extension excluded a portion of one of the farm's pastures with electric fencing. This strip of pasture was excluded from grazing pressure, and five different treatment plots were established with different combinations of grass seed, clover, fertilizer, dragging for seed incorporation, and a control plot that received no treatment. The goal of the exercise was to determine which combination of factors resulted in the most successful pasture seeding.



During the seminar, staff and visitors discussed the different plots, and came away with the following highlights:

1. Proper pH and fertilization are vital to the success of pasture grasses. Without these necessary factors in balance, the grass will not grow to its maximum potential.
2. Broadcasting seed without any method of incorporating the seed into the soil is not a highly successful method of establishing pasture grasses.
3. Horses must be excluded from reseeded pastures for an extended period of time.
4. Early spring is an opportune time to seed clover. The freeze/thaw action incorporates these small seeds into the soil and spring growth is successful.
5. Spring seeding of grasses is not as successful as fall seeding. (Please see the front page article on the Equine Fall Pasture Renovation Incentive Program.)

The take-home message is this:  
**Start Planning Your Pasture Planting 1 To 2  
Years Ahead Of Time**

Call the Montgomery Soil Conservation District for more information on getting this process started the right way on your farm. **To be included on the Equine Database and receive future workshop announcements, please contact the Equine Resource Conservationist, Eddie Franceschi 301-590-2855.**

## BERMUDA GRASS

The MSCD is working with the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service to promote Bermuda grass (warm season grass) for doing pasture and heavy use area (sacrifice lot) demonstration plots. The MSCD will provide seed free of charge for these practices. Bermuda grass pasture and heavy use area practices qualify for the 2008 Equine Fall Pasture Renovation Incentive Program.

What makes Bermuda grass attractive for equine operations is that it can survive the high soil compaction, low soil moisture, short grazing height and low maintenance that are common in horse pastures and heavy use areas.

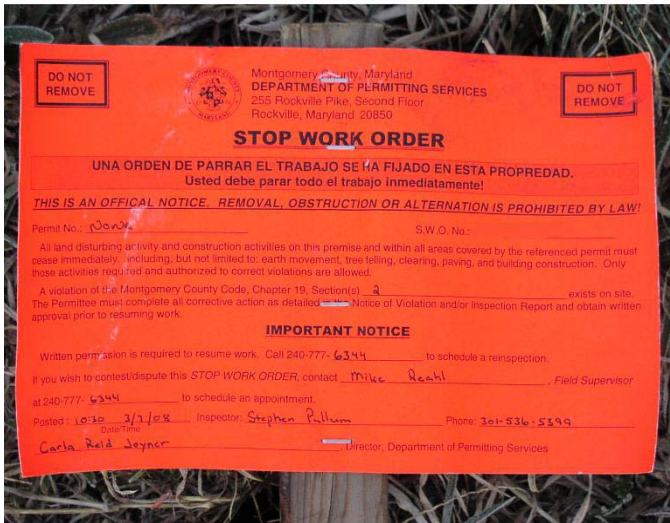
The timetable to establish Bermuda grass is from June 1 to June 30. For research purposes the timetable has been extended to July 14. It is very important to thin out and suppress the existing vegetation by grazing before planting Bermuda grass. If you are interested in seeding Bermuda grass this summer, contact Mr. Eddie Franceschi at 301-590-2855 as soon as possible.

## COVER CROP PROGRAM

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has funding available for the 2008-2009 Cover Crop Program. The program sign-up dates are June 23 thru July 8<sup>th</sup>. Many of the per-acre payment rates are significantly higher than the 2007-2008 program. In order to qualify, the acres enrolled in the program must be documented in a Nutrient Management Plan. The planting dates are October 1<sup>st</sup>, October 15<sup>th</sup> and November 5<sup>th</sup> which correspond to different payment rates. The type of grain planted and the planting method used will also correspond to variances in payment rates. This year, there are no maximum acreage limits for traditional cover crop sign-up. However, there is a 300-acre limit for the Commodity Cover Crop Program. If you have not received an announcement about the program, please contact the MSCD office 301-590-2855.



## FILL ON AGRICULTURAL LAND, DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU



MSCD or the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services prior to importing any fill onto your farm. Only normal and customary agricultural BMPs are eligible for this exemption. We do not consider filling and leveling land to be a normal and customary agricultural best management practice. Therefore if you have an opportunity to receive “free fill” to fill and level off some area of your farm, please remember to contact MSCD at 301-590-2855 or the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services at 240-777-6320 for permit information.



There has been a tremendous amount of fill dirt moving around Montgomery County lately. The development that is taking place in this region is generating huge amounts of this material, and with the movement of fill, many landowners have been approached about filling certain areas on their property. Please, before you accept fill, consider the possible ramifications of your decision. It is our understanding that fill dirt moved off a development site must go to a site that has an approved sediment control plan and an approved storm water management plan. This obviously represents a substantial cost to the site developer or excavator. It may be considerably cheaper for them to encourage a farm owner to accept and utilize the fill material. However, if a landowner accepts the fill material, he or she must possess a small land disturbance permit from Montgomery County. This includes a sediment control plan and possibly a storm water management plan for the site. If a person is accepting fill material without the proper permits and plans, that individual may be subject to a fine, may be required to obtain all permits at considerable expense, and may be required to remove all of the fill material and truck it off of his or her farm. These actions can make “Free Fill” quite expensive!

Under some circumstances a MSCD cooperator may accept fill as a construction component of an agricultural best management practice (BMP). This must be called for in the BMP design and documented in the soil conservation plan developed for the farm. Minor fill sites that are less than 5000 sq. ft. may be exempted. Therefore it is important to contact the

## AGRICULTURAL EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (Ag. EAP)

Farmers will remember the drought of 2007 with images of stunted, curled-up corn leaves, brown pasture fields, and failed soybean crops. With a rainfall deficit between January and November of 2007 recorded in excess of 14” at Dulles Airport, those thunderstorms on the horizon that never seemed to arrive were a reality for many area producers.

In response to the projected losses of \$13 million, County Executive Isiah Leggett and County Council Member Michael Knapp spearheaded a drought relief plan that distributed approximately \$1.5 million to eligible area farmers. In the face of unrealized income, this support assisted farmers in bridging the financial gap left open between last year’s disappointing growing season and the hopes for a better year in 2008. A total of 83 county farmers received payments in April of 2008, covering more than 30,000 acres of farmland.

An evening reception is being planned which will provide farmers an opportunity to thank the County Government for the Agricultural Emergency Assistance Program and the drought relief funding that was provided. Please stay tuned for an announcement of the time and place for this event. For information on this event, please contact the Department of Economic Development –Agricultural Services Division at 301-590-2810.

## INVASIVE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT:

### Mile-a-Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*)

Buckwheat family (*Polygonaceae*)



Invasive plants take over and degrade natural ecosystems. They disrupt the intricate web of life for plants, animals, and microorganisms and compete for limited resources. One such plant is Mile-a-Minute weed also called Asiatic Tearthumb.

The native range of Mile-a-Minute is Eastern Asia, China, and the South Pacific islands. The plants' stems are covered with recurved barbs which are also present on the underside of the leaf blades. The light green colored leaves are shaped like an equal-sided triangle and alternate along the narrow, delicate stems. The plant produces small white flowers and dark blue berries which are arranged in clusters.

Mile-a-Minute grows rapidly and climbs other shrubs and vegetation, thus blocking the available light and causing the underlying plants to become stressed. The weight of the Mile-a-Minute can also cause damage to the stems and branches of other plants. If left unchecked the stressed plants may die. Large infestations of Mile-a-Minute can cause severe damage to natural areas. Because the weed can smother tree seedlings, Mile-a-Minute weed has a negative effect on Christmas tree farms, forestry operations and natural area reforestation.

The first population of Mile-a-Minute was established in the late 1930's in a nursery in York County, Pennsylvania. Holly seeds from Japan were planted and the weed came up with the Holly. The nursery owner allowed the plant to grow and reproduce and subsequent efforts to eradicate it failed. In the past 55 years the plant has spread up to 300 miles from the original site. Today, Mile-a-Minute is found in Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, DC.

Mile-a-minute weed propagates best in open and disturbed areas, along the edges of woods, wetlands, stream banks, and roadsides, and uncultivated open fields, resulting from both natural and human causes. Natural areas such as stream banks, parks, open space, road shoulders, forest edges and fence lines are all typical areas to find Mile-a-Minute. It can also be found in environments that are extremely wet with poor soil structure. It will tolerate shade for part of the day, but prefers full sun exposure. Mile-a-Minute weed is primarily a self-pollinating plant with fruits and viable seeds being produced without assistance from pollinators. Vines generally die with the first frost. Mile-a-Minute is a prolific seeder, producing many seeds on a single plant over a long season, from June until October in Virginia, and a slightly shorter season in northern areas. Seeds can persist in the soil for as long as 7 years, with staggered germination over the years.

A variety of control measures can be used for management of Mile-a-Minute weed depending on the level of infestation.

#### **Biological**

A biological control program targeting Mile-a-Minute weed was initiated by the US Forest Service in 1996. A small weevil, *Rhinoncomimus latipes*, was found to be host-specific to Mile-a-Minute weed (Price *et al.* 2003, Colpetzer *et al.* 2004), and field release was approved by USDA-APHIS in 2004. Weevil adults feed on Mile-a-Minute foliage, and larvae feed within nodes and may cause sufficient damage to reduce seed production. Weevils have been released in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and have established at every release site. Studies are ongoing concerning the impact and best way to use these insects for control.



### ***Chemical***

The most effective herbicides for controlling Mile-a-Minute are systemic products like glyphosate. Annual plants such as Mile-a-Minute can usually be controlled with lower rates of herbicide. Timing is important to insure the plants haven't gone to seed. For details on the use of chemicals to control this weed, check out the website reference at the end of this article and review product labels.

### ***Cultural***

Cultural methods can be utilized to discourage the introduction of Mile-a-Minute to an area. It is important to maintain vegetative community stability and to avoid creating gaps or openings in existing vegetation. Maintaining broad vegetative buffers along streams and forest edges will help to shade out and prevent establishment of Mile-a-Minute weed.

### ***Manual***

Hand pulling of seedlings is best done before the recurved barbs on the stem and leaves harden, but may be done afterwards with the help of thick gloves. Manual removal of vines may be conducted throughout the summer. Try to pull up the whole plant including its roots. Depending on the site and situation, pulled weeds can either be bagged and disposed of in a landfill or left until the following year and monitored for emergence of new seedlings. Previously infested sites need to be rechecked several times each year, and new plants must be removed until the seed germination period is complete (roughly early April until early July in the middle Atlantic states).

### ***Mechanical***

For low growing infestations that cover the ground, repeated mowing or weed whipping of vines will reduce the plant's reserves and prevent or reduce flowering which in turn reduces fruit and seed production.

The information contained in this article was taken from the National Park Service website below and photos were obtained at [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org). For more information on Mile-a-Minute and other invasive species please visit the National Park Service website [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact.htm) or the USDA Forest Service website at [www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants)

To volunteer for the Weed-Warriors, a growing and important effort to remove invasive plant species from Montgomery County parks visit [www.MontgomeryParks.org](http://www.MontgomeryParks.org) or call volunteer services at 301-495-2504.

Montgomery Weed Control can also be a good resource for assistance with controlling invasive and noxious weeds on your property. Contact Gary Barkman at 301-503-6024.

## **MONTGOMERY FORESTRY BOARD SCHOOL REFORESTATION**



Every year Montgomery SCD cooperates with the volunteers on the Montgomery Forestry Board to do several tree plantings at schools throughout the County. The School Reforestation Program provides students with a hands-on learning experience that helps them understand how important trees are for our environment.

This spring, the Forestry Board planted trees with teachers and students at Sally Ride Elementary School in Germantown and Clarksburg Elementary School. About 100 students participated in each project. These projects are a collaborative effort, supported by the volunteer Forestry Board members and their organizations. PEPCO provided the trees and Stadler Nursery helped auger the holes to make the digging easier for the kids.

All the students felt a great sense of accomplishment for the forest they helped to create and gained a greater understanding of how conservation practices such as this help restore our environment and clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

## **SEEDING AND STABILIZATION: CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF CONSERVATION BMPS**

One of our main goals at the Montgomery Soil Conservation District is to help county residents reduce soil erosion and improve the quality of the water in our streams. The list of conservation best management practices (BMPs) used to achieve these goals is substantial, but installation costs can vary considerably. BMPs often consist of several different components, many of which can be quite expensive. Though all of these components are vital to the successful installation of a BMP, one of the most affordable steps is also one of the most important. The seeding and stabilization aspects of a conservation practice and the follow-up maintenance of the established vegetation for the life of the practice can determine the ultimate success of the BMP. When considering all of the expenses, such as hiring an excavator, hauling in concrete or stone products, the cost of watering troughs, or roof guttering and downspouts, etc., it is important to invest the time to establish a successful vegetative cover that will insure the success of the projects.



*This waterway withstood a 4" inch rainfall the day after it was seeded. The erosion control netting paid for itself in the first day.*

A good seeding job is dependant on many factors: proper preparation of the soil for the type of vegetation to be established, the presence of fertile top soil, the proper vegetative species for the particular job, appropriate time of year for seeding that species and a number of other factors, including the weather. Seeding of a channel is one of the most common jobs, and can also be one of the more difficult types. Water flows in higher velocities in a channel situation and the flow is more concentrated than it is higher up in the landscape where sheet flow

occurs. These higher velocities require a grass that has a well developed root system and will form a dense sod. Turf type tall fescue, a cool season variety, is the best grass for this job. Once proper grade and seedbed are obtained, it is important that the site be protected from erosion during the period of vegetative establishment. This will typically require the installation of erosion control netting that is stapled to the finished and seeded channel. This netting can withstand the high velocity of water flow in the channel and protect the seedbed from erosion. A soil test is always a good idea to determine the proper amount of lime and fertilizer necessary to prepare the site for successful seedling establishment.

In the last couple of years, many seeding jobs done by the county's farmers have withstood large rainfall events that have occurred within a day or two of seeding. In these cases, the farmer had done an excellent job installing erosion control netting and it served its intended purpose.

Seeding of a channel is one of the more typical practices, but there are plenty of other situations in which seeding and stabilization are critical to the success of a practice. Each job is unique, and may require site specific solutions. The Soil Conservation District staff follows the NRCS Critical Area Stabilization Standards and specifications. Please contact us if you have a site that needs to be stabilized or with any other conservation needs for your farm.

## **EQIP INFORMATION**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a USDA cost-share program available to landowners in Montgomery County. There is a continuous open sign-up enrollment for this program. The program is designed to support conservation practices such as grassed waterways, forest stand improvement, wildlife habitat, critical area plantings, pest management, animal waste storage structures, stream fencing, watering facilities, and heavy use areas for livestock. Many other conservation practices are also eligible for EQIP cost-share. We urge farmers to set appointments with planners to review your conservation plan. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss your agricultural operation and determine if you want to apply for cost-share to install conservation practices on your farm. If you would like to discuss any conservation needs on your property and how EQIP can assist, please call us at 301-590-2855.

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



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Derwood, MD 20855

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**Let Us Know If We Can Help You!**

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District provides technical assistance for a variety of conservation practices free of charge. In addition, the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS) may pay up to 87.5% of the installation cost of these practices for qualifying landowners:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste Storage             | <input type="checkbox"/> Grassed Waterway       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Riparian Buffer           | <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Cover Crop      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversion                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Border           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Use Area Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Filter Strip           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roof Runoff Mgt System    | <input type="checkbox"/> Stream Fencing         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trough or Tank            | <input type="checkbox"/> Strip Cropping         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrient Mgt Consultant   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stream Crossing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Development        | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Area Planting |

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If you would like to see if you qualify for cost share, want more information on these or other conservation practices, need help with developing a conservation plan for your property or updating an old plan, please mail or fax this form to us and we will contact you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax to 301-590-2849

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301-590-2855 or emailing to  
[Karen.Walker@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Karen.Walker@montgomerycountymd.gov)

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