CONSERVATION MATTERS

A publication of the Montgomery Soil Conservation District

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

June 2013, Issue 17

COVER CROP PROGRAM

Farmers throughout Maryland have been using cover crops as one way to reduce the amount of nutrients that end up in the Chesapeake Bay. Cover crops, which are planted in the fall following the harvest of corn, sorghum, soybeans, vegetables, or tobacco, usually consist of cereal grains like wheat, rye, spring oats and barley. Once established, these crops continue to grow during the winter months and take up excess nutrients in the soil and reduce erosion from rain, snow, and wind.

Sign-up for this year's program starts June 24th and ends July 15th. This is a first come, first serve sign up. The MD Department of Agriculture has $20 million allocated for the program this year. The base rate for traditional cover crops is $45 per acre. Additional incentives are available based on planting method, planting date, and other factors. Traditional cover crops must be killed down in the spring. Alternatively, farmers who would like to harvest their cover crop under the commodity portion of the program will receive $25 per acre. There are no enrollment caps for either program option.

In the fall of 2012 farmers in Montgomery County certified over 14,000 acres of Cover Crop! This is an increase of almost 1,000 acres from the fall of 2011. In total, over 415,000 acres of winter cover crops were certified in Maryland for the winter of 2012. Thank you to all who participated and we hope to work with you again this year. Please visit our office to sign up, or check out the details of the program on MDA's website-**www.mda.maryland.gov**

CONGRATULATIONS

After a long and illustrious career with the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, District Conservationist J.G. Warfield will be moving on to greener pastures. J.G. has worked for NRCS for 24 years and has been the District Conservationist in Montgomery for over 20 years. During his tenure, J.G. has overseen the implementation of thousands of best management practices on tens of thousands of acres of farmland. His tireless promotion of conservation has not only benefitted water quality and other natural resources but it has also helped farmers throughout the county to be better stewards of the land. All the Montgomery SCD staff and Supervisors wish to express our sincere appreciation for J.G.'s dedication and guidance through the years and we wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement!

SAVE THE DATE

The Annual MSCD Cooperators Dinner is set for Thursday, September 5, 2013 and will be hosted by Robert and Linda Lewis of Lewis Orchards.

WEED WATCH:

Purple Mint Plant - *Perilla indicutescens*, *Perilla Frutescens*; Purple Mint is an escaped ornamental plant originally cultivated in India in the early 1700's. It is a problematic weed, which grows in tightly clustered patches and can be toxic to ruminants and horses. It thrives in partial shade but is able to tolerate and spread into areas with full sun. It has a distinct minty scent, akin to that of Anise. Like other members of the mint family, it often has a square stem, green to purple in color.

Purple Mint has been used medicinally by humans and unlike many true mints, does not reproduce through rhizomes, but relies exclusively on seeds for reproduction. What may be a single plant in one growing season can quickly spread into a large, dense patch the following year. The plants can reach up to 4 feet in height, with jagged toothed, spade-shaped leaves up to 6 inches in width. Due to these large leaves and tight growth pattern, it quickly strangles out grasses and other forage material, leaving bare ground devoid of plants after it has completed its growth cycle in late fall. The best method for control is to remove the plant through mowing or pulling before it begins flowering or going to seed. It is during this time that Purple Mint is most toxic to horses, cattle, and other ruminants. Plants accidently grazed when they are young and tender or after they have died do not have the same level of toxicity. Consumption of the plant during its flowering and seeding phases usually results in respiratory distress, and often pneumonia and death. Signs of poisoning include heavy breathing, and separation of the poisoned animal from the rest of the herd.

Seeds often do not stay viable in soils for more than 3 years, and do not travel far from the parent plant, though heavy winds can deposit them further away. Frequent mowing controls it, and pulling up the plants before the flower spikes emerge is also an effective control. The plant has a fibrous root system, and is easy to extricate. If at all possible, avoid pulling the plant at the flowering stage. Even after the plant is dead, the seeds may continue to mature and become viable.

2013 MONTGOMERY COUNTY ENVIROTHON COMPETITION

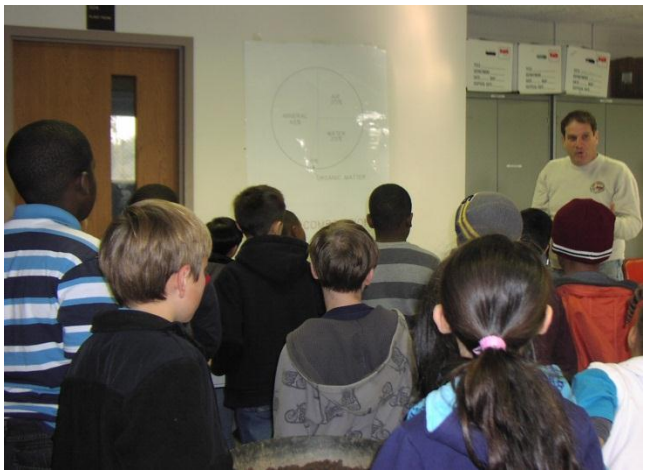
A team of five juniors from Richard Montgomery High School will represent Montgomery County in the Maryland State Envirothon competition to be held on June 19th and 20th at the Western Maryland 4-H Center in Bittinger, Maryland. Team "Militant Platypodes" defeated a host of teams from Montgomery Blair, Poolesville, and Wootton High Schools in the county competition held on April 24th. Each year, teams of high school students test their environmental knowledge by competing against each other in five subject areas - soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and a 5th environmental issue which changes yearly. This year's 5th issue is pasture and rangeland management, which was chosen by the host state for the North American Envirothon competition. The winner of the Maryland State Envirothon will travel to Bozeman, Montana August 4th-9th to compete against other teams from North America in the Canon Envirothon. We want to say congratulations to team "Militant Platypodes" and best of luck at the State Competition!

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
2012 Annual Report

With the county population nearing 1 million people, educating our citizens about conservation is one of the most important things the Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) can do to promote the future of agriculture.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH AGRICULTURE

MSCD provides this educational opportunity for students in conjunction with University of Maryland Extension. This two week program involves about 2900 fourth grade students and 500 teachers and parents for a total of 3400 participants. Close Encounters represents a comprehensive agricultural learning experience for students from schools across the County. Many young people today are unaware of the benefits agriculture provides and of their responsibility to be good stewards of the land. Close Encounters with Agriculture creates a rare opportunity for these students to enjoy a hands-on learning environment, which can really have an impact on their lives. The children go home and teach their parents about the things they learned, increasing the benefits of the program even further.



With the assistance of the Farm Bureau, Master Gardeners, and local farmers the students experience interactive programs in nutrition, production agriculture and conservation. It is a fun day for everyone and the kids learn about topics not normally covered in their regular curriculum.

Tens of thousands of students have participated in Close Encounters with Agriculture over the years. Each child gains a better understanding of where their food comes from and how agriculture helps to protect our soil, water and other natural resources.

EQUINE SEMINARS – MSCD partnered with University Maryland Extension and Montgomery County DED Agricultural Services Division to continue the series of educational seminars being offered to the equestrian community. The goal of these seminars is to help educate participants on which combination of practices will provide the most successful pasture management. Seminars were held at the Equine Rotational Grazing Demonstration area at the University of Maryland's Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Clarksville. These seminars highlight several important considerations for horse owners:

- Examples of proper pasture management and rotational grazing techniques.
- Selecting forage species based on nutrition and growth qualities.
- The value of heavy use areas and opportunities for establishing vegetative HUAs.
- Weed identification and management techniques.
- Cost-share and technical assistance available to horse owners.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Planning and Implementation – Ninety-one Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans were developed for Montgomery County landowners to protect 9,093 acres of land. The District continued to expand the availability of programs for the growing equestrian community. Providing cost-share programs and technical assistance to horse owners and the growing organic farming community will continue to be critical components of conservation efforts in Montgomery County.

Best Management Practices
Following is a list of the practices completed by MSCD Cooperators in 2012.

Agrichemical Handling	1	Structure
Conservation Cover	224	Acres
Crop Rotation	7,742	Acres
Contour Farming	24	Acres
Cover Crops	13,116	Acres
Nutrient Management	6,278	Acres
Integrated Pest Management	4,865	Acres
Critical Area Planting	2	Acres
Residue Mgmt	4,828	Acres
Pasture and Hay Planting	23.6	Acres
Waste Utilization	368	Acres
Waste Storage Structure	4	Structures
Heavy Use Area Protection	.1	Acres
Grassed Waterway	3.7	Acres
Forage Management	60.6	Acres
Fencing	3,876	Feet
Watering Facility	2	Structures
Prescribed Grazing	17.3	Acres
Forest Stand Improvement	160.7	Acres
Wildlife Upland Habitat Mgmt	.5	Acres
Field Border	4.9	Acres
Filter Strip	3.8	Acres
Roof Runoff Mgmt	.2	Structures
Brush Management	30.4	Acres
Diversion	900	Feet
Pipeline	650	Feet
Access Control	16.3	Acres

Cost-Share Funding for Landowners
Leveraging private investments in conservation with government sponsored cost-share funding provides additional opportunities for landowners to implement practices that will improve water quality. Financial incentives represent an important link in the efforts to clean up our local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. By offering landowners a combination of state, federal and local cost-share, the District strives to help farmers protect their soil, water, and other natural resources. One example of leveraging funds for conservation projects is the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Cover Crop Program. Cover Crops are one of the most important practices for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay, and Montgomery County farmers have doubled their participation in this valuable conservation program over the last five years. In 2012, Montgomery County farmers planted 13,116 acres of cover crop resulting in cost share payments of $557,017. This also means that farmers invested considerable private capital in conservation this year.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The MSCD provides a variety of educational opportunities for landowners, students, and the general public. Educating the citizens of Montgomery County about agriculture and conservation is one of our most important initiatives. Some of our educational programs for 2012 are listed below:

- Envirothon-The MSCD has one of the largest county Envirothon Competitions in the state, with 22 teams and over 100 students participating in the 2012 program. The 2012 Montgomery Envirothon Team tied for 1st place at the Maryland Statewide Envirothon Competition.
- Volunteer Tree Plantings-MSCD staff help coordinate volunteer tree planting projects in cooperation with the Montgomery Forestry Board. These School reforestation projects provide a hands-on learning experience for students and help to restore forested habitats to school sites throughout the County.
- Workshops, Fairs, and Expos-The MSCD staff also contacted thousands of constituents through their participation in the County and State Fairs, Maryland Horse Expo, the Flower and Garden Show, Arbor Day and Earth Day Events.

- Cooperators Dinner–The purpose of the MSCD Cooperators Dinner is to recognize members of the agricultural community for their contributions to conservation, and to inform legislators about conservation practices being implemented in Montgomery County. Approximately 120 people attended the event, including several local and state elected officials. The event was held at Ruppert tree nursery in Laytonsville to showcase this interesting and growing component of agriculture.
- MSCD representatives serve on a variety of Workgroups – Montgomery Forestry Board, Maryland Horse Council, County Agriculture Advisory Committee, Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection Group, Regional Agricultural Workgroup, and Forest Conservation Advisory Committee.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for the Agricultural Sector

- The recent efforts to restore the water quality in the Chesapeake Bay have focused on nutrient reduction goals established by the TMDL process. Nutrient reduction goals for the agricultural sector in Montgomery County were developed through the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Two-year milestones have been targeted which include numbers of best management practices (BMPs) to be installed by Montgomery County landowners.
- Worked extensively with cooperators to develop soil conservation and water quality plans (SCWQ Plans) on the farms enrolled in the MDA Cover Crop Program. This effort led to more acres of SCWQ Plans being completed in 2012 than any previous year in the last decade.
- Provided outreach to the equestrian community on better methods for managing their manure. These efforts resulted in 4 newly installed manure storage facilities to improve water quality and increase farm efficiency.
- Concluded a multi-year pasture restoration grant program which encouraged landowners to follow best management practices, seeding and fertilization guidelines, and other renovation specifications to create vibrant, well established pastures.
- Continued work on a 10-acre reforestation project at the Oaks Landfill in cooperation with Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. Multiple projects at this site have involved hundreds of students and volunteers planting thousands of trees.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

Every year at the annual Cooperators Dinner, MSCD recognizes members of the community that have made major contributions to conservation and education. For 2012, the Cooperator of the Year Award was presented to Dr. Tom G. Hartsock of Porky Pines Farm. Dr. Hartsock has implemented a variety of Best Management Practices to protect natural resources, improve his operation, and enhance water quality.

2012 Cooperator of the Year Dr. Thomas G. Hartsock pictured with George Lechlider MSCD Chairman and Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Earl "Buddy" Hance.

Over the years, he has planted trees to create forest buffers along his streams; built a composting facility, and installed a roof runoff system. Most recently he worked with MSCD to install stream fencing and a stream crossing to exclude his cows and horses from the stream. He also uses rotational grazing and pasture management techniques to keep his fields productive.

George Lechlider pictured with Gail Joyce, recipient of the 2012 Equine Conservation Award

The MSCD also recognized Mrs. Gail Joyce with the 2012 Equine Conservation Award. Mrs. Joyce participated in the Pasture Demonstration Program, which was funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and administered by MSCD. In addition to restoring her pastures and implementing a rotational grazing system, Mrs. Joyce also generously hosted a pasture walk event to help educate other horse farm owners about the benefits of pasture management.

The 2012 Volunteer of the Year Award went to Paula Jean Hallberg. Paula has provided outstanding leadership and assistance in the Close Encounters with Agriculture program. Over 2,500 4th grade students participate in this program every year and she assists in the environmental track. Paula helps to organize Master Gardeners and other volunteers for the water quality section.

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Paul Meyer receives the MASCD Employee of the Year Award from MASCD President R. Calvert Steuart

At the 2012 Annual Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts Meeting, Paul Meyer was recognized as the employee of the year for the entire state. Paul has worked for the Maryland Department of Agriculture - Resource Conservation for the past 25 years. He is currently the only technician in the Montgomery Soil Conservation District. Therefore he oversees all of the design and implementation work for all soil conservation related practices in the county. Paul plays a vital role in enabling MDA and the Montgomery Soil Conservation District to achieve their conservation goals. More importantly, Paul has helped hundreds of landowners install best management practices that protect the environment and enhance their operations. Congratulations to Paul for receiving this well-deserved recognition and we would like to thank him for all his hard work and dedicated service to the citizens of Montgomery County!!!!

REVISED NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) revised nutrient management regulations went into effect on October 15, 2012. Changes are being phased in over the next several years. Below are the new requirements and important dates.

- Effective immediately, if you have a one year or multi-year Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) that was written before 10/15/2012 it will need to be updated when it expires or when there are changes to your operation to meet the new MDA requirements.
- Beginning in the spring of 2013, manure, biosolids, and other organic nutrients must be injected or incorporated within 48 hours of application. There are exceptions for spray irrigation on a growing crop, permanent pasture, hay fields, and highly erodible fields. Clarification of the exceptions and additional guidance can be found at www.mda.maryland.gov
- Beginning in the fall of 2013, fall application of nitrogen is prohibited on small grains if a fall nitrate test shows levels greater than 10 parts per million (ppm) for wheat or 15 ppm for barley. Cover crops must be planted when organic nutrient sources are applied in the fall. Farmers with fields that have a Fertility Index Value of 150 or greater must use the new Phosphorus Management Tool to determine phosphorus rates for plans.
- Beginning January 1, 2014, farmers are required to establish a 35 foot setback for fertilizer applications adjacent to surface waters and streams. This is reduced to 10 feet when "directed" application methods are utilized. No crops may be grown in the 10 foot setback other than hay or pasture forages. Also, livestock access to surface waters is restricted to a minimum 10 foot setback.
- As of July 1, 2016, nutrient applications are prohibited between November 1 and March 1 for the Eastern Shore and between November 15 and March 1 for the Western Shore. This requirement applies to farmers with 50 or more animal units (1 animal unit equals 1,000 pounds of live animal weight).
- On March 1, 2020, farmers with less than 50 animal units are prohibited from applying nutrients between November 1 and March 1 on the Eastern Shore and November 15 and March 1 on the Western Shore.

CREATING POLLINATOR HABITAT

April Showers bring May flowers which brings…. pollinators! It is estimated that animal pollinators are needed for the reproduction of as many as 90% of flowering plants and for pollinating about 75% of the agricultural crops grown worldwide. Pollinators play an important role in the biological diversity in natural ecosystems. However, the numbers of native pollinators are declining. They are threatened by habitat loss, disease and other environmental issues. To address these challenges, MSCD has worked with several cooperators to establish new pollinator habitat sites in Montgomery County. Landowners can create valuable pollinator sites on areas as small as half an acre. Cost-share programs are available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts. Establishing native flowers and grasses can add aesthetic beauty to your property and provide critical habitat for this important component of our food chain. If you are interested in establishing a pollinator habitat please contact MSCD.

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD 20855-1421
Phone: 301-590-2855
Fax: 301-590-2849
http://www.montgomeryscd.org

You Can Receive
This Newsletter by EMAIL!!!
Enjoy a full color version emailed to you as soon as it is posted to our website. Register for our email group by calling 301-590-2855 or emailing to Karen.Walker@montgomerycountymd.gov

Montgomery Soil Conservation District

Staff
David C. Plummer, District Manager
J.G. Warfield, District Conservationist
Karen Walker, Administrative Aide
Melbaliz Santiago, Soil Conservationist
Paul Meyer, Engineering Technician
Travis Gorleski, Regional Equine Planner (Grant)
Eddie Franceschi, Equine Resource Conservationist
James Harne, Conservation Planner II
Vacant Position, Conservation Associate

MSCD Board of Supervisors

George E. Lechlider, Chair
Robert Butz, Vice Chair
Wade F. Butler, Treasurer
Robert Stabler, Member
Pam Saul, Member
Allen Belt, Associate Member
Robert Butts, Associate Member
Tim McGrath, Associate Member

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.