

Conservation Matters



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

October 2016

Calendar

Close Encounters
with Agriculture
Oct. 11-28

Last Day for Cover
Crop Planting
Nov. 05

Fall FSCAP meeting
Focus on Small
Farms
Nov. 05

Last Day to Report
Cover Crop Planting
Nov. 14

MSCD OFFICES
CLOSED
Veterans' Day
Nov. 11

Thanksgiving
Nov. 24-25

Montgomery Winners at Home and Statewide



MASCD President, Charles Rice, honors Breck Debnam and Robert Stabler as 2015 Cooperators of the Year.

At their annual meeting held August 1, 2016, the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) presented their Outstanding Cooperator of 2015 Award to Montgomery County's Pleasant Valley Farm Partnership, LLP (PVF).

PVF is a partnership between Robert and Randy Stabler and JB and Breck Debnam. The partners have always actively managed their operation with consistently strong conservation ethics.

The farm has about 4,000 acres of cropland and hay land and a large herd of cattle. They have installed many Best Management Practices over the years, including no till and low till practices, cover crops, grass waterways, stream fencing, and spring fed watering facilities in their pastures.

Robert and his brother, Drew, began farming alongside their father in 1958. Robert has been a very active member of Montgomery SCD since 1987 and currently serves on the MSCD Board of Supervisors.

Robert has also hosted several tours showcasing both agriculture and conservation, including a Congressional Farm Tour this year. Both Robert and Drew were elected to the Governor's

Agricultural Hall of Fame in February of 2012.

PVF has worked with the Federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program (MACS) to install BMPs' on the farm.

Their tireless commitment to conservation and their willingness to educate young students, elected officials, and the general public are a real tribute to the stewardship they show for the land and the agricultural industry.

Supervisor Robert Butz Recognized for Special Achievement

MSCD Chairman Robert Butz, received a special achievement award recognizing his leadership of the District's efforts to procure critical additional funding from Montgomery County Government.

Butz dedicated his time and energy through a series of public hearings, e-mails, meetings with County Council members and their staff, and discussions with agency representatives. All of his commitment and hard work paid off, as the County Council appropriated funding for district operations, staff and a conservation incentive program from the Water Quality Protection Charge.

Funding is used in part for local projects that may not qualify for state or federal funding, and to encourage cover crop program participants to update existing Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans on their farms.



Cover Crop Program Fall Reporting Is Upon Us

The leaves are beginning to turn and the temperature is beginning to drop - which can only mean - fall is in the air and Montgomery County farmers need to start thinking about certifying their cover crops for the upcoming 2016-2017 season.

During the program's three week sign-up period held earlier this summer, 1,853 farmers visited the state's network of local soil conservation district offices to apply for grants to plant 691,743 acres of protective cover crops on their fields this fall.

Thirty-nine Montgomery County farmers accounted for 23,972 of those acres.



rivers and streams, as well as the Chesapeake Bay.

Farmers statewide have exceeded every Chesapeake Bay milestone goal for cover crops since the Environmental Protection Agency established nutrient and sediment limits for the Bay in 2010 - known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

Cover crops have been shown to control soil erosion, reduce nutrient runoff, and protect the water quality in

Based on the newly released 2016-2017 Cover Crop Program sign-up figures, farmers are on track to exceed the next two-year milestone commitment to be completed by June 2017.

In addition, cover crops are considered one of the most cost-effective means of helping to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

The State has allocated \$22.5 million for the 2016/2017 Cover Crop Program.

Lower Seed Germination Rates Allowed ... Density To Be Tested

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will allow farmers to plant small grain seed stock with a germination rate of 65-79 percent instead of the 80 percent normally required by the Cover Crop Program as long as seeding density standards are met in the field. Responding to weather conditions this spring that have impacted seed quality, MDA will allow the use of lower germination seed with certain caveats.

Typically, MDA's Cover Crop Program allows farmers to use seed they may have saved. However, any seed used is required to meet Maryland Seed Law and Regulatory Standards and must meet the required minimum germination rate of 80 percent. In addition, certain planting methods must be used to plant the seed to ensure a good stand.

This adjustment relaxes **only** the existing germination standard, which has been lowered to 65 percent.

All other seed quality criteria must be met. Farmers will be required to achieve specific seedling density at the time of fall certification to qualify for the program.

Soil conservation districts, which administer the program for the department, will be checking all fields that are planted with substandard seed to assess seedling density and establish compliance.

Farmers should consult with their local University of Maryland Extension (UME) staff regarding the recommended seeding rates necessary to

achieve the required stand.

Please contact the MSCD prior to using low germination seed to learn the seedling density requirements, which vary based on the crop type and planting date.



COVER CROP DATES TO REMEMBER

Planted by 10/01 reported by	10/07/16
Planted by 10/15 reported by	10/21/16
Planted by 11/05 reported by	11/14/16
Last day to plant	11/05/16
Barley must be planted by	10/15/16
Broadcast stalk chop method ends	10/15/16

For more information:



Check out our
Twitter page
@MontgomeryMDSCD

Contact the MSCD
office at
301-590-2855



or email
Karen.Walker@md.nacdn.net

BMP Verification - Part of the Program

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), working in collaboration with Maryland's Conservation Partnership, assists agricultural producers in conservation planning and the installation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) which help to balance crop and livestock production with the need to protect natural resources.

As the lead partner in the delivery of agricultural conservation programs in Maryland, Maryland Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) have a very important role in assisting MDA to accomplish the conservation measures outlined in the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The WIP established for the agricultural sector provides



tracking metrics which demonstrate how Maryland is achieving the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As part of the TMDL process MDA was required to submit a Quality Assurance Project Plan to the EPA. This plan outlined the verification process for BMPs

accomplished as part of the Chesapeake Bay WIP.

The proposal was approved and field verification of the existing BMPs will begin in the near future. MSCD staff will be facilitating the process by contacting the local cooperators who have installed BMPs on their land and by escorting MDA staff on the field visits.

MDA views this verification process as an essential tool for reaching WIP goals because once BMPs have reached their maintenance threshold they may not be credited for nutrient reduction.

By verifying that these practices are still in place and functioning, MDA will have a more accurate appraisal of the amount of nutrient reduction taking place and the level of the WIP goals being achieved.

Agricultural Services Booth Wins at the Fair



A booth that was the combined effort of the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, University of Maryland Extension, Montgomery County Farm Bureau and the newly formed Montgomery County Office of Agriculture received a first place ribbon at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair.

The prize was for given for the **Best Agricultural Display** at the 2016 Fair.

It contained several interactive educational displays, including a chance to milk a 'cow,' see soil erosion first hand and a chance to win cash and a set of trading cards spotlighting local agricultural producers from the 2016 Montgomery County Farm Tour and Harvest Sale.



There was plenty of free literature and educational materials. Staff members from the offices involved were also available each day to respond to questions about the role of farms and farming in Montgomery County.

But perhaps the most popular member of the booth's recruits was both silent and unnamed. The free standing milkable "cow" provided educational opportunities, hours of fun and excitement for young and old fairgoers as they took a turn on

the milking stool.

The cow is one of two owned by UM Extension constructed from plywood and containing a lifelike "udder" that when correctly squeezed produced a white mystery substance, which vaguely resembled milk.

Such a "star" really deserves a name... Perhaps a new activity for next year's fair?



2016 Annual Cooperators Dinner

The 2016 Cooperators Dinner was held on September 8th, 2016 at the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA), Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter located at 20601 Izaak Walton Way in Poolesville.

Approximately 120 people attended the dinner, including several local and state policy makers. The delicious buffet style dinner was complimented by samples of two of the Waredaca Brewery's fine locally made beers.

The focus of the evening was to showcase the agricultural industry and conservation in Montgomery County. The gathering provided a unique opportunity for local producers to learn about the existing conservation practices on the IWLA farm and how local and state farmers are doing currently in relation to the water quality improvement goals set for 2025.

The "B-CC" Chapter was chartered on October 23, 1935 with an initial membership of 15. In 1949 the chapter purchased a 366 acre farm, over the years additional land purchases have allowed the farm to grow to its current 623 acre size.

The property includes woodlands, campgrounds, picnic areas, meeting facilities, shooting ranges, cut-your-own Christmas trees and a Chapter House. The restoration of the existing historic cabin and surrounding buildings is ongoing.

Conservation and Education are

the primary focus of the IWLA-B-CC's mission and various educational programs are held on site each year.

IWLA provided an excellent opportunity for guests to learn about the farm's history which began when 1,000 acres was awarded to a titled

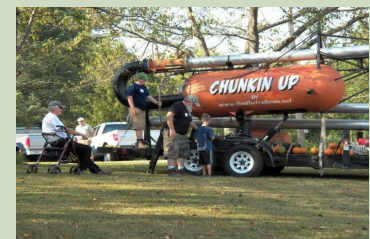
Scotsman in the 18th century and continued through an era of tobacco production. Archeologists have also discovered a well which may date back to a civil war era encampment.

The event was held in the IWLA's air conditioned Chapter House located on the site of the farm's original barn.

Guests had a chance to take wagon rides, tour the facilities, take a turn on the shooting range and fire the

pumpkin cannon.

IWLA members gave a variety of educational exhibitions including a versatile hunting dog demonstration and lessons on the life of the honey bee.



LAUREN GREENBERGER**2016 COOPERATOR
OF THE YEAR**

Robert Butz,
MSCD
Chairman presents
Lauren
Greenberger
with the 2016
Cooperator of the
Year Award

Each year MSCD honors those who have made an outstanding contribution to local agriculture and conservation. Lauren Greenberger of Dickerson was the 2016 recipient of this award.

Greenberger became interested in protecting the natural resources on her small farm, and contacted the District following a recommendation from the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.

Initially, her interest was in protecting the riparian area of a small stream in a pasture on her property that she rents to graze beef cattle. NRCS and MSCD provided technical assistance and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) provided cost-share funding to fence the stream and plant a riparian forest buffer in early 2016.

Of her own volition, Greenberger has planted a windbreak using native trees and shrubs. Future plans include the installation of a watering facility, pipeline and pollinator habitat, using cost share funds from the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

In addition, Greenberger is an active Master Gardener volunteer and has assisted with the Close Encounters with Agriculture Program for 4th grade students held each October at the Agricultural History Farm Park.

Her efforts are greatly appreciated and show that a **small** farm can have a **big** impact on protecting natural resources and the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:**CONSERVATION SPONSORS**

**Marchwicki Excavating Co.
Farm & Equine Business Services, LLC
Willard Agri Service**

CONSERVATION SUPPORTERS

Air View Farm - William E. Barnes

Homestead Farm

Stoney Castle Farm

Windridge Farm, LLC

And our hosts ...

**Bethesda- Chevy Chase Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America**



Hans Schmidt, MDA Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation, awards Chuck Schuster an MDA Secretary's Citation for his volunteer service to MSCD

Chuck Schuster 2016 Volunteer of the Year

Chuck Schuster, horticulturist and long-time member of the University of Maryland Extension Service was honored at the 2016 MSCD Cooperators Dinner for his untiring volunteer efforts related to all things agricultural in Montgomery County.

Schuster has given countless hours of his time to the County Envirothon Competition by designing and administering a critical part of the test each year, has spent thousands of hours working at both the County and State Fairs and is an integral component of the education team for the Close Encounters with Agriculture Program held each October at the Agricultural History Farm Park.

Thank you ...Chuck!

Invasive Weed of Special Concern (*Amaranthus palmeri*)

Palmer Amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*) is a species of pigweed that is becoming a major problem as it spreads through the Mid-Atlantic.

It has been found in southern Maryland and on the eastern shore and has certainly spread to other parts of the state as well. The major issue with this invasive weed is it can be resistant to glyphosate and acetolactate synthase (ALS) herbicide chemistry.

Palmer Amaranth is native to the desert southwest and has spread due to its aggressive growth rate, prolific seed production and resistance to multiple herbicides. It has migrated through the south as a weed in soybean and cotton fields. A single female plant can produce 500,000 tiny seeds which are then easily moved via farm equipment.

The plant is very tolerant of dry conditions but also can grow aggressively when moisture is present in the soil. In addition to glyphosate resistance, plants in North Carolina and other southern states have been found to be resistant to atrazine, pigment synthesis (HPPD), and Protox (PPO) herbicides. These factors and the rapid spread of the plant northward from the cotton belt are a major concern for crop producers here in Maryland.

Palmer Amaranth plants that are more than 4 inches tall can be suppressed by herbicides but tend to grow back. Fields should be clean before planting. Gramoxone can be utilized on smaller plants provided that it is applied with plenty of water and coverage is excellent. Residual herbicides should be applied close to planting.

This can provide three to four weeks of control and will give the soybean plants time to emerge and



start to close the canopy. This also allows time to apply post emergent herbicides. In Maryland trials, residual herbicides containing sulfentrazone or flumioxazin has



proven effective.

When applying herbicide, make sure to follow label directions and all applicable setbacks.

Row spacing is also important in soybean fields;

15 inch rows allow the plant canopy to close up two weeks earlier than 30 inch rows.

This and residual herbicides can provide the best weed suppression

in the early stages of Palmer Amaranth development.

Plants that have grown larger than 4 inches should be hand pulled. If hand pulling is not an option, consider tillage to kill the plants. Seeds are fairly short lived - if it is possible to avoid production of new seeds, the seed bank in the soil will decline rapidly after just a few years.

Palmer Amaranth seeds are easily spread by equipment, especially combines. Be sure to thoroughly clean equipment when moving between fields.

More information regarding the prevention and control of this weed can be found in the May 12, 2016 University of Maryland Extension, Agronomy Newsletter.

Available online at:

<https://extension.umd.edu/news/newsletters/agronomy-news-1>

It's Breeders' Cup Day — we'll be watching the race!

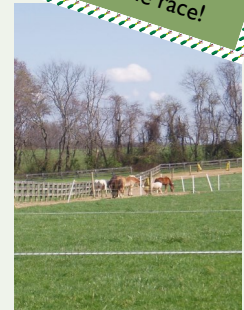
Own a Small Horse Farm?

Want to Learn More About:

- ⇒ Manure disposal
- ⇒ Pasture Improvement
- ⇒ Who To Call?

Come to the **Fall Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program** (FSCAP) Meeting

Scheduled for Saturday, November 5th between 12-2 pm at
Great Strides Therapeutic Riding Center
26771 HOWARD CHAPEL ROAD
DAMASCUS, MD 20872



For more information contact 301-590-2853 or by email

Shelly.Ingram@montgomerycountymd.gov

Federal Programs Offer Aid to Producers

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has several programs available to help improve resource concerns on farms. They include :

EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program

CSP Conservation Stewardship Program

AMA Agricultural Management Assistance

EQIP is the main financial assistance program and provides funding for resource issues on cropland, pasture, forest, and for animal waste management practices. These issues include erosion, pasture improvements, wildlife habitat enhancement, and many more.

CSP is a program that rewards farmers for doing a good job AND requires a higher level of stewardship for each type of land use enrolled in the program. One or more activities or practices to improve the stewardship should be evident on each of the land use categories enrolled.

AMA, is a risk management program, and therefore the funds are geared towards practices such as irrigation improvements and seasonal high tunnels.

All of the programs require that the applicant have records with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) . The local FSA office is conveniently located with the conservation agencies at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood.

For more details about these programs, please contact the NRCS staff at the office, or call 301-590-2855. You may also e-mail Jim Myers, NRCS District Conservationist at james.myers@md.usda.gov. Or visit the NRCS website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs>



Just want to know more about your soil?

Check out the NRCS Web Soil Survey...

<http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov>

Blue Crab Population Numbers Rising



The Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab is perhaps the most sought-after shellfish in the Mid-Atlantic Region, and is caught both commercially and recreationally.

If you are wondering just how many Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs there are in the bay you may want to check out the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) winter dredge numbers.

The winter dredge survey produces information that is

essential for the management of the species, such as an estimate of the number of crabs over-wintering in the bay and the number of young crabs entering the population each year. Also calculated is the estimated number of females that could spawn within the year, which is an important indicator of future spawning potential. Estimating the total number of crabs living in the bay allows DNR to calculate the percentage of the crab population that is removed by harvest each year.

Overall, total crab abundance increased significantly again in 2016. In 2011 an update to the blue crab stock assessment recommended a female specific target of 215 million spawning age female crabs and a minimum threshold of 70 million

spawning age female crabs. This proposal was adopted by Maryland, Virginia, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission.

After a decrease in 2014, the number of spawning age females increased in 2015 and again in 2016.

Read the full report at:

<http://dnr2.maryland.gov/fisheries/pages/blue-crab/dredge.aspx>

Year	Millions of Crabs	Year	Millions of Crabs
2003	334	2010	663
2004	270	2011	452
2005	400	2012	765
2006	313	2013	300
2007	251	2014	297
2008	293	2015	411
2009	396	2016	553

**MONTGOMERY SOIL
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**

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

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