

PRINCE GEORGE'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

BY R. CALVERT STEUART

On April 27, 1935, Congress enacted the Soil Conservation Act, creating the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service (SCS). This action created a strong partnership with farmers who were struggling from the devastating impacts of the Great Dust Bowl. More importantly, the law was the catalyst for the creation of soil conservation districts across the nation to assist the farm community with soil erosion issues.

Since those humble beginnings, the Prince George's Soil Conservation District (PGSCD) has grown into an efficient technical agency that administers multiple national, state and local program initiatives. These programs include soil and water conservation planning, implementation of conservation best management practices on farms, nutrient management planning, total maximum daily load (TMDL) reductions to local tributaries that drain into the Chesapeake Bay, review and approval of soil erosion and sediment control plans for rural and urban grading activities, review of small ponds for dam safety, administration of the Prince George's County's agricultural land preservation program as well as multiple education and outreach programs.

Federal, state and local agencies, coupled with a variety of grants, provide funding for salaries, operations and equipment. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Prince George's County Government are primary partners working with Prince George's Soil Conservation District.

Since becoming a Board Member on the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) in 2013, I have discussed locally led conservation programs with numerous District representatives from around the country. Of the over 3,000 Districts nationwide, the strongest are those who have developed cooperative partnerships. Successful Districts continually nurture existing partnerships and seek out new opportunities with other organizations and agencies. Due to our accomplishments over the decades, PGSCD is recognized as a leader in the delivery of soil conservation and water quality programs on a local, state and national level.

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THE DISTRICT'S LARGO SATELLITE OFFICE: ONE YEAR LATER

BY SUPREET REKHI

The Prince George's Soil Conservation District satellite office has been open in Largo, Maryland located in the County's Department of Permits, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE) building for one full year. Since opening in October 2014, there has been a steady increase in plan submissions and visits from citizens and engineers alike. We are pleased to provide convenient, timely assistance and customer service to anyone who walks through our doors on the second floor. Currently, the satellite office is staffed with one resident engineer, one administrative assistant, a rotating engineer and a supervisor. New submittals meeting set requirements can be dropped off and picked up at the convenience of the applicant. This is especially helpful to those obtaining permits in the permitting office downstairs in the same building. The office staff feel at home in their new space and enjoy working with County residents on a daily basis.

DISTRICT STAFF IN THE COMMUNITY

BY JULIE MILLER AND SUPREET REKHI



Arbor Day is celebrated in the month of April each year and serves as a day dedicated to planting trees and learning of their importance. The Arbor Day celebration was held on April 24, 2015 at Fort Washington Forest Elementary School. The day's festivities have historically been characterized by events including tree plantings, concerts, ceremonies and school plays. This year was no exception. Volunteers from the District engaged in planting 49 trees and 21 shrubs around the school grounds, and watched entertaining performances prepared by the students. The



event was attended by hundreds of individuals representing the educational, governmental and private sectors, as well as local County residents. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade learned of Arbor Day's significance and how trees benefit the environment. The District has been an annual partner with the Arbor Day celebration for 20 years and looks forward to participating in more events like this to encourage young children to have a greater appreciation for the environment and how it impacts their lives.

USDA-NRCS WEBINARS

BY LAURA SUTPHIN

The District has been taking part in the online webinars. A total of eighty-seven webinars have been provided to the staff for educational enrichment since the beginning of 2015. Examples of these webinars include, "Artful Rainwater Design" by Penn State, "Concrete 101" by Chaney Enterprises and "How to Implement Rotational Grazing in Equine Facilities" by USDA-NRCS.

EDUCATION

BY DEBBIE SANDLIN

Prince George's Soil Conservation District and the Prince George's County Public Schools co-sponsor the annual Prince George's County Envirothon. This high school level event combines "hands on" experiences, testing and teamwork on environmental issues. The 2015 event was held April 22nd at the William Schmidt Outdoor Education Center in Brandywine, Maryland. The winning team was from Eleanor Roosevelt High School and led by Ms. Peggy Brosnan. They went on to represent Prince George's County well at



the state competition held at St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's City, Maryland, June 17-18. The Eleanor Roosevelt team placed 6th overall, just .50 points out of scholarship contention. Eighteen teams from across the state participated, and the top team earned the right to represent Maryland at the national competition. The top ten teams at the National Level earn scholarships. The experience is invaluable to the students and each year the District strives to reach more students. Several past County Envirothon students have chosen careers in the environmental field. In addition to sponsoring the event, the District offers scholarships for local winning team members. For more information on the Envirothon program, or if you wish to participate or support this program, please contact our office at 301-574-5162 Ext. 3.

TOYS FOR TOTS

BY LAURA SUTPHIN

PGSCD is pleased to participate for the third year, in the Toys for Tots Drive! Toys for Tots is a program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve which distributes toys to less fortunate children throughout the United States. Toys for Tots helps to bring communities together with a common goal.



2014 COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Jeff and Alison Shenot established Jug Bay Stable in 1998. With the help of their three children, Josh, Sam and Gaby, they operate a small, private horse farm in Upper Marlboro. The farm is situated along the Patuxent River's Jug Bay and adjacent to the Mount Calvert Historical and Archeological Park. This area is rich with ecological and cultural significance, due to exceptionally high biodiversity and historically important archeological resources.

Alison is an avid supporter of the MD horse industry, with over 25 years riding and training race horses and over 20 years riding and training sport horses. Jeff came from a 6-generation PA farming family, who operated a large dairy/orchard/vegetable farm. He is also a fish and wildlife biologist, and documented nearly 240 bird species observed at Jug Bay Stable.

Jeff and Alison became District Cooperators in April 2004. The small farm they own and operate has 7.5 acres devoted to pasture, and is some of the most sensitive farm land in the County with very sandy soils prone to soil and wind erosion. Steep slopes leading down to the river require extra attention and the tidal influence of the Patuxent River places most of the farm in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.

With technical assistance from the District and participation in the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program, they installed the first reinforced concrete animal waste storage structure in Prince George's County. The structure is capable of holding 1,250 cubic feet of stable waste. Because there is insufficient land to spread, the manure is removed three to four times a year and taken to a local composting facility. Alison and Jeff follow approved waste management and nutrient management plans, both prepared by the District. Pastures are periodically over seeded and the herd of five to seven horses is rotated to ensure adequate ground cover, and re-growth between grazing cycles is maintained. Lime and fertilizer are applied per the approved nutrient management plan.

In 2013, Alison and Jeff "went solar". Financing and permitting were a considerable challenge but they persisted, and installed 64 solar panels on the south side of their stable. The solar panels eliminated nearly all electric utility costs, and essentially supply enough power for both the stable and their home throughout the year.

Last but not least, they firmly adhere to supporting local agriculture and buy all their feed, supplies and services from local county businesses. Through their dedicated conservation efforts, the Shenot family has created a model small horse farm. For this, Jug Bay Stable has earned the title "Prince George's Soil Conservation District's 2014 Cooperator of the Year."



DIGITAL ARCHIVING AND INDEXING

BY BRITTANY PRITCHETT AND LAURA SUTPHIN

The District has been storing plans/projects in hard copy format for over three decades. Archiving and indexing plans digitally has become a very useful tool. This action has allowed for more of a “real time” collaboration and coordination of projects, a more robust “recovery operation” system and allows for the implementation of electronic project acceptance/review and approval.

In the spring of 2015, the District began the ambitious and arduous process of digitizing its paper cache and developed an efficient enduring system to make retrieval and collaboration as sufficient and seamless as possible. The early efforts are clearly paying huge dividends in improvements in the project delivery and coordination systems at the District.

To further support and sustain the long-term initiative, the District has invested in professional grade equipment, (in-house use) and implements a policy requiring an electronic copy of all approved plans upon review completion. It also makes available FTP capabilities to clients to allow for the uploading of larger size documents.

Here’s to a successful beginning of a very promising endeavor.

CPR & AED TRAINING

BY LAURA SUTPHIN

Prince George’s Soil Conservation District is now equipped with two Automated External Defibrillator (AED) machines and multiple Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certified employee’s. An AED is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses the life-threatening cardiac-arrhythmias of ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia in a patient, and is able to treat them through defibrillation, with the application of electrical therapy which stops the arrhythmia, allowing the heart to reestablish an effective rhythm. CPR is an extremely useful skill that can potentially end up saving someone’s life. Our office is now well trained and prepared.



RECYCLING PROGRAM

BY DEBBIE SANDLIN

In 2015, we continued our recycling efforts. District, MDA and USDA staff recycled over 3,600 lbs. of paper and nearly 100 cubic feet of plastic at the District’s Headquarters building in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Without these efforts, those waste products would have been buried in the County landfill.

DISTRICT STAFF ON THE MOVE

BY JOHN TARR



The District celebrated its first annual staff retreat on October 14th. The focus of this, and succeeding events, is to provide staff with opportunities to experience a cross-section of the customer base and their various activities that contribute in some way to the economic vibrancy of the county. That said, District staff took a break from their busy schedules to get out and explore two of the county's most picturesque farms. The main attractions for this year were the *Villa de Alpaca Farm* in Aquasco, Maryland and *Robin Hill Farm and Vineyards* in Brandywine, Maryland.

Founded in 1871, Villa de Alpaca Farm is the only self-sustaining Bicentennial Farm run completely by one woman. Fleece from the alpacas raised on the farm is used to create various luxurious items of clothing for sale and display, which help to sustain the farm's operations. While visiting the farm, staff had an opportunity to tour the facility and the magnificently restored Victorian home built 140 years ago which also serves as the owners residence.

The afternoon saw the staff at the Robin Hill Farm and Vineyards. The farm, family owned and operated for over 55 years, transitioned from a plant nursery to a vineyard and event venue in 2012. The staff enjoyed lunch in Robin Hill's charming restored wooden barn where events, such as weddings and private parties, are held. Lunch was followed by a friendly and intense cornhole competition and a hayride tour of the breathtaking views of the farm and vineyard operation.



“DISCUSSIONS IN SITE AND CONSTRUCTION INSPECTIONS”: THE DISTRICT’S NEW TRAINING SERIES FOR THE LOCAL JURISDICTIONS’ INSPECTIONS STAFF

BY JOHN TARR

The District hosts a number of technical training, consultation and development events/activities per year for its numerous partners in support of their respective programs. One of its longest standing engagements is with the inspection staff of the County’s Construction Inspection and Enforcement program and other local municipalities. The authority of the County’s program has been housed in several agencies over the years (DPW&T, DER/DOE) but is now part of the mandate of the Department of Permitting Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE).

On June 16, 2015, the District hosted staff from the County’s program, and representatives from the City of Bowie to the first occurrence in a series titled “Discussions in Site and Construction Inspections.” With upward of thirty professionals in attendance and an engaging atmosphere, the participants were guided through such topics as follows:

- Know Your Authority: Prevailing Regulations, Ordinance, and Laws
- Emergency Site Protocols: Limits And Governing Criteria
- Field Adjustments: Major And Minor – What Is Allowed
- Controls And Devices: “Dos And Don’ts”...

With the prevailing theme centered more on field applications, a healthy discourse ensued. Participants reported immensely positive comments on the delivery, content, and hands-on approach of the event with a number of them doing follow ups on specific topics and aspects.

The District thanks all the participants for their time and engagement, and would like to encourage feedback on specific technical or other needs that it can meet. Agencies are again reminded that the District’s staff is always available to provide assistance in-house or in the field.

EARTH DAY

BY LAURA SUTPHIN

To support Earth Day 2015, Prince George’s Soil Conservation created seed packets containing a Northeast Wildflower Seed mix to promote native pollinators. These seed packets were available at several locations including; The Upper Marlboro Community Center, Marlton Elementary School and at our Annual Cooperator Dinner. Each seed packet covers approximately 250 sq. ft. Scientists estimate that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of animal pollinators.



2015 – MDE'S EVALUATION OF LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES PROGRAMS FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY

BY JOHN TARR

Construction Review, Inspection and Enforcement delegated authority is exercised by several municipalities within the County. Two of these, the Cities of Bowie and Laurel, had their respective programs evaluated by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2015. Areas outside of their incorporated limits fall under the jurisdiction of the County's program, which was also audited in 2014.

The City of Bowie, which administers its own Stormwater management program and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit in addition to construction inspection and enforcement, also completed its formal adoption of the revisions to their Grading, Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance as mandated by MDE. This is a requirement for final approval by MDE to continue the administration of their programs (authority). The County formally adopted the revisions to its Ordinance on June 23, 2015. The evaluation of Bowie's program occurred in the first week of June and that of Laurel in November. Some of the programmatic aspects covered during the evaluations included the following:

- Discharge Detection and Elimination and Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations
- Construction Site and Stormwater Runoff Control and Post-Construction Stormwater Management

District staff attended the activities (program and field evaluation) that formed part of MDE's review as a resource and support to the local municipalities' programs. The District also assisted in the review of the revisions to their existing ordinances in preparation for submission to MDE for final approval.

It is extremely comforting to note that all of the referenced programs were reauthorized by MDE following their evaluations. The District maintains very strong working relationships with its local partners by providing necessary and required input and resources in support of their programs.

NEW FACES OF THE DISTRICT

BY LAURA SUTPHIN



Joseph Haamid USDA-NRCS District Conservationist has retired after 37 years of public service. For much of that time he was the District Conservationist for both Anne Arundel and Prince George's Soil Conservation Districts. Beginning January 2016, Joseph started as the Prince George's Soil Conservation District's 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund Grant Planner. In his new position, he will be writing soil conservation and water quality plans for farmers in Prince George's County. Joseph will play a key role in helping the District meet WIP goals in the upcoming years.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY DIANA LAGUNES

PLANNING ACTIVITIES	CONSERVATION APPLICATION
New Cooperators (5) 313 ac	Farmers Applying BMPs 78 ea
New Farm Plans (23) 2298 ac	BMPs Installed on Farms 143 ea
Revised Farm Plans (27) 3480 ac	Acres Receiving Treatment 3858 ac
Total Plans (50) 5778 ac	Estimated Tons of Soil Saved 1679 tons

BMP Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCE	BMPS INSTALLED
MACS Capital Projects (2 Agreements)	2
MACS Cover Crop (24 Farmers)	2086 ac
Farmer/ landowner funded	117
TOTAL BMPs Applied	143

Equipment Rental Program: Total Rental Income \$5265.40

EQUIPMENT TYPE	FARMERS	ACRES
No-till Drill (10') OLD	5	122.5
No-till Drill (10') NEW	10	225
No-till Drill (6')	14	83.4
Pasture Aerator	0	0
5 ton Lime Spreader	4	125
Post Pounder (# of posts)	8 (557)	N/A
Manure Spreader	2	10
Sub-soiler	0	0
Vicon Fertilizer Spreader	1	5

Best Management Practices Applied

PRACTICE	AMT APPLIED	PRACTICE	AMT APPLIED
Winter Cover Crop	2086 ac	Residue & Tillage Management	1297 ac
Heavy Use Area Protection	1 ac	Stream Crossing	4 ea
Nutrient Management	377 ac	Ponds (rebuild)	1 ea
Nutrient Management Plans Written	6 ea	Conservation Crop Rotation	505 ac
Pasture/Hay Land Planting	125 ac	Field Border	14.5 ac
Forage Harvest Management	42 ac	Prescribed grazing	37.7 ac
Critical Area Planting	3 ac		

Total Tons of soil saved: 1,679 tons of soil saved.

MDA 2014-2015 Cover Crop Program: 24 farmers fall certified 2,086 acres for \$47,908.00.

MACS Cost Share Payments: 2 agreements for 2 BMPs totaling \$33,098.68.

MACS Applications Submitted: 5 applications for 5 BMPs.

LAND PRESERVATION

BY JEANINE NUTTER

There are several land preservation options in Prince George's County. Programs available Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALFP), Historic Agricultural Resource Preservation Program (HARPP) and the Rural Legacy Program (RLP). All of these programs purchase development rights and place a conservation easement on the property. Should a landowner like to donate a conservation easement without monetary compensation there is the Maryland Environment Trust (MET). As of December 31, 2015 a total of 50 properties (5,054 acres) have been permanently preserved under the District's administration of the Land Preservation Program. Currently, 14 additional properties (932 acres) have applied to sell easements. Of those, 9 properties (587 acres) have received offers and expect to settle in 2016. We continue to seek out landowners with interest in applying to these programs.

Program	Number of Easements Preserved	Preserved Acres	Number of Pending Applications	Acres Awaiting Preservation
HARPP	30	2,973	11	798
MALPF	18	1,651	0	0
Rural Legacy	2	430	3	134
Total	50	5,054	14	932

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

BY WADE HAMPTON

Prince George's Soil Conservation District offers various pieces of conservation equipment available for cooperators to rent. The most popular piece of rental equipment is the post pounder. The post pounder is being used frequently on a variety of farming operations. So far this year the pounder has been used to construct miles of livestock fencing, deer exclusion fencing and even acres of new vineyard. The post pounder has a few significant advantages over traditionally augured post holes. First, posts are solid in the ground immediately after installation without the need for soil tamping around the post. The second major advantage of the pounder is the speed at which the posts can be installed. A normal 4-6" post can be driven in the ground in under a minute, even in dry or frozen ground. Another handy feature of the pounder is its ability to drive posts at an angle, this makes it capable of driving posts on steep terrain and installing angled vineyard end posts. Before you start your next fencing project contact the Prince Georges Soil Conservation District and we will get you started.



OUTREACH! PARTNERSHIPS! AND THE ART OF GIVING BACK...

BY JOHN TARR

The Outreach Program at the District provides the vehicle for channeling and extending resources and expertise to our partners and affiliates throughout the County.

The program in years past has made, and continues to make and extend, significant investments of time and expertise in the educational and technical areas to numerous establishments within the County. A sampling of projects undertaken in 2015 is presented below:

Branch Avenue in Bloom, Marlow Heights Maryland

Urban Agriculture in recent years has experienced a major upsurge in interest and participation with individuals, local establishments and leaders joining to implement innovative projects. One such project is *Branch Avenue in Bloom*. Located on Branch Avenue (MD Route 5) and situated on a piece public property provided by the County, it has borne many fruits in terms of community rejuvenation and engagement. The project consists of a series of raised planting beds offered for community involvement, horticulture and enjoyment.

The District's Board of Supervisors approved the donation of a park bench and a 22.4 cubic foot compost tumbler to facilitate the re-use of organic material in the sustenance of soil health for production and operations. Other assistance to be provided by the District includes soil testing, assistance with soil health and agronomy.

Mary Helen Mother Jones School, Adelphi Maryland

The Enquirer Gazette showcased an article by the Principal of Mary Helen "Mother" Jones Elementary School, Ms. Niki Newman-Brown, in June of 2015 which reported on and highlighted the school's recent projects and undertakings related to academia and its STEM program. The article also lamented some erosion issues that was making the outdoor activities area (courts) unusable after significant rainfall events.

Following initial discussions, District staff led by District Manager, Mr. Steven Darcey, visited the site on July 16th to investigate and offer solutions to the drainage problem. The final outcomes went beyond the initial offer of assistance. To address the drainage issue, or lack thereof, the District devised a plan that could be effected under its current maintenance program – a savings in time and the procurement of additional resources. Other outcomes included suggestions and recommendations on how to use this problem (drainage and erosion) to create learning activities for the student's. The feasibility analysis and preliminary siting and sizing for the creation of a demonstration stormwater management feature (bio-retention) that would be designed as a pollinator habitat (butterflies and other pollinators), and the commitment of time and educational resources could be utilized in the curriculum. The District remains rooted in its belief that an early engagement of students in the sciences can take numerous forms, and be fun! (a fact constantly reinforced by Mr. Darcey).

The District later forwarded information on the *Chesapeake Bay Trust's K-12 Environmental Education Mini Grant program* as an additional resource that could be utilized towards planned and ongoing Science Enrichment programs/ curriculum activities.

DISTRICT STAFF

Steven E. Darcey, District Manager

Joseph Haamid, Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist II (USDA District Conservationist Retired)

John Tarr, District Engineer

Brenda Sanford, Urban Engineer

Supreet Rekhi, Urban Engineer

Kebede Shihamit, Urban Engineer

Eugene Whitehead, Urban Engineer

Julie Miller, Urban Engineer

Robert "Yates" Clagett Jr., Conservation Engineer

Wade Hampton, District Planner

Jeanine Nutter, District Planner/Land

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Debra Sandlin, Administrative Assistant/Program Coordinator/Editor

Terry Hampton, Administrative Aide/Office Manager

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Brittany Pritchett, Administrative Aide

Laura Sutphin, Administrative Aide

Diana Lagunes, MDA Planner

Eileen Beard, MDA Planner/Regional Equine Outreach Specialist

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"Society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy." - John Sawhill

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