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Conserving Soil, Water, and
Natural Resources Since 1941



PRINCE GEORGE'S
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2023 Annual Report





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Board of Supervisors

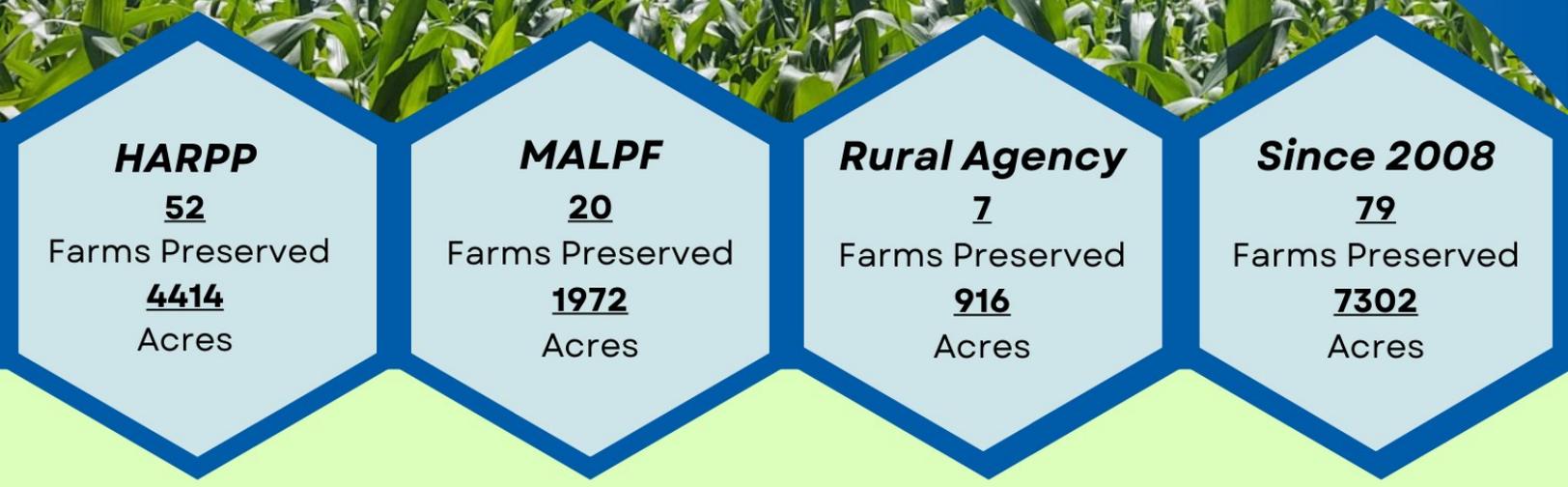
- R. Calvert Steuart — *Chair*
- James “Pete” Parreco — *Vice Chair*
- Amy Posey — *Treasurer*
- Robert Slade — *Member*
- Andy Colevas — *Member* (Welcome Aboard!!)
- Phil Hutton — *Associate Member*



Photo Credit: Three Springs Farm—
Brandywine, MD

Agricultural Land Preservation

Agriculture is a significant part of Prince George's County, both as an industry and as a contributor to the County's character. It is a goal of the Prince George's Soil Conservation District to preserve agricultural land from development. These properties will produce local commodities, protect scenic vistas and enhance environmentally sensitive areas. In order to achieve this goal, the District administers several programs that preserve land through perpetual easements while allowing landowners to retain their private property rights. Land preservation programs administered by the District include the Historic Agricultural Resource Preservation Program (HARPP), Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Rural Legacy Program (RLP). As Administrator for Prince George's County, the District has preserved 79 properties on 7,302 acres utilizing \$50.6 M of land preservation funds.



2023 Program Highlights

Prince George's County had the first shoreline restoration project approved by the MALPF program on a preserved farm. Shoreline erosion is responsible for loss of valuable agricultural land and has been identified as a significant source of sediment load to the Chesapeake Bay. Prince George's County and the Maryland Department of the Environment utilizing public funds approved a living shoreline project on a 110-acre preserved farm along the Patuxent River. In cooperation with Prince Georges Soil Conservation District, Prince George's Department of the Environment and the Clean Water Partnership restored over 1,300 feet of eroding shoreline. The living shoreline will save valuable agricultural land as well as improve water quality to one of the Chesapeake Bay's major tributaries.



Agricultural Conservation

The Agricultural Conservation Program through the District provides farmers and stakeholders engaged in agricultural activities with the technical assistance and potential funding needed to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to conserve soil and water resources. Cooperators receive technical services free of charge. Planners and technicians will assist in the preparation of soil conservation and water quality plans on farms and appropriate BMPs and engineering designs as needed. Staff can also assist with programs and applications with the landowner if eligible for State or Federal cost-share.

**53**

Soil Conservation & Water Quality Plans written, protecting

3975
acres

162

Best Management Practices covering 3500 acres, installed by

65
producers

38

Federal and State contracts representing **\$803,383** cost-share

2,600

Acres of Cover Crops planted in 2022-2023 by

10
producers

2023 Ag Program Highlights

Staff continues to work on incoming landowner and producer requests, working on updating expired plans in an effort to meet state Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals, and maintenance/operation of our equipment rental program. The District Conservationist, Colleen Kiefer, has been a tremendous asset to the office and has helped us welcome in new staff to the ever-increasing workload (Nya Seagers in her new role as NRCS soil conservationist, Khalia Giles as NRCS soil conservationist, John Knowles-Kellett as RC&D program support specialist and Shana Burke RC&D technician). PGSCD had 25 EQIP contracts obligated totaling \$522,670 and 13 MACS contracts totaling \$280,713 this past year. Thank you to all of our cooperators & partners for all your hard work helping get conservation on the ground!

Outreach and Education

At Prince George's Soil Conservation District we strive to make an impact through our educational efforts and outreach programs. Our District has worked in various capacities to improve the education and knowledge of our citizens, honor those who have made a difference in their own communities, and promote new ways of learning to empower students for a better future (and planet). A few of the outreach and education programs we are involved with include: Envirothon; County Fair; Beautification Committee; Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP); Annual Cooperator's Dinner; PGCPS – Environment, Agriculture, Natural Resources; District Coloring Contest; Community Garden Summit; PGC Bloomin' Open Mic Nights; Spring Seedling Giveaway and Vendor Fair; Earth Day Plant Giveaways; Arbor Day Tree Planting; and Community Farmer's Markets.

Featured: Envirothon 2023 Winners (Left) and their Envirothon coach (right) - Laurel High School



15

Teams from 8 schools competed in the 2023 Envirothon Competition with training provided to over **120** students

\$47,000

Envirothon scholarship money awarded to **30** high school students since 2013

25

Outreach events coordinated in 2023, reaching **1000's** of County residents

225

Guests attended Annual Cooperator's Dinner **600** Copies of Annual Report distributed

2023 Envirothon Competition



The Envirothon is a natural resources competition for high school students. Five-member teams study provided reference material and participate in hands-on training in soils, aquatics, wildlife, forestry, and a fifth environmental issue that changes from year to year. The winning team earns the right to compete at the next level, be it the state or national event. The Envirothon provides a fun and exciting way for high school students to learn about natural resources, make informed decisions about the environment, and earn scholarship money for college. The event is a problem-solving competition that challenges students to work collaboratively to answer questions and conduct hands-on projects focusing on natural resource issues. The goal is to increase students' environmental knowledge and understanding, while also motivating young people to care for the environment by practicing stewardship in their homes, schools, and communities. We are proud to announce that Laurel High School won first-place honors at the 2023 Prince George's County Envirothon for the second year in a row and went on to compete at the state level.

Urban Agricultural Conservation

Through its Urban Agricultural Conservation (UAC) Program, the District provides urban farmers and other stakeholders engaged in urban agricultural activities with the tools, services and potential funding needed to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to conserve soil and water resources. Urban soils are important to protect because they are found in watersheds that provide drinking water, food, waste utilization, and natural resources to communities. Typically, these soils have been manipulated and may be contaminated. District staff can help identify climate-smart solutions to improve the health and productivity of urban soils for growing food and mitigating stormwater runoff. The Program is supported by staff from the District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Maryland Department of Agriculture.

**16**farmer workshops &
community events conducted**8**Soil Conservation & Water
Quality Plans developed**74**Conservation Technical
Assistance (CTA) site visits on**43**

urban farms

50stakeholders engaged with
UAC & food system initiatives**2,896**Individuals reached through
outreach events**\$121,423**USDA NRCS funding through
CSP & EQIP for**11**

urban farms

2023 UAC Program Highlights

In addition to working with 43 urban farmers and 50 stakeholders, the District provided CTA at the Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins Regional Park which supports 10 urban farm businesses. Staff played a leadership role in a variety of initiatives related to urban ag, conservation, and food security. For example, they assisted with the planning of a Chesapeake Climate Smart & Regenerative Agriculture Forum and lead two key breakout sessions, Technical Assistance and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice. In addition, staff presented at the Mid-Atlantic Crop Management School and other state stakeholder events. The UAC Program was on the 2023 Prince George's County Community Garden Summit planning team and co-hosted a soilSHOP event with The Capital Market, the Centers for Disease Control's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and EPA. It lead urban farm tours for stakeholders including the Prince George's County Ag Resources Advisory Committee, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. The UAC Program helped host the annual Seedling Giveaway & Vendor Fair as well as Open Mic Nights.

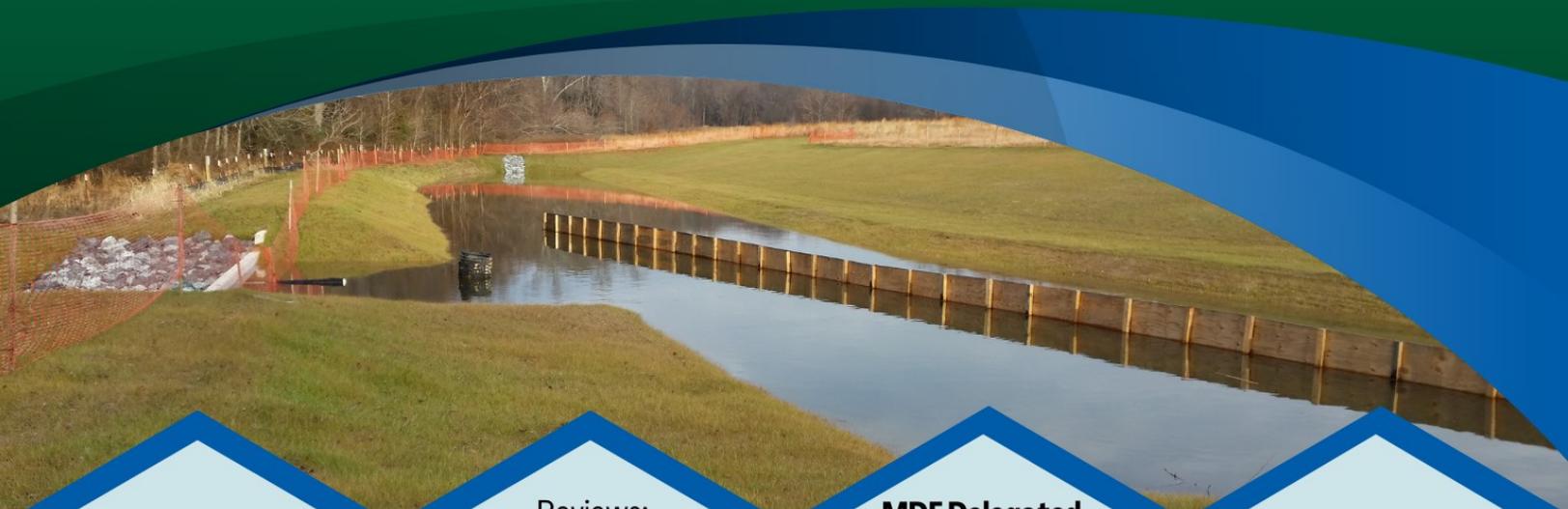
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Urban Development and Conservation Program

Commercial, industrial, and residential projects predominantly define the urban landscape within the County. They also drive, to a large extent, its economic engine. The Urban Development and Conservation Program provides planning, technical guidance, and approvals during the project development/permitting phase, and consultation and support to delegated authorities for inspections, and clients alike, during the construction phase. The program reviews and approves grading, erosion, and sediment control documents to both support urban/economic development and proactively mitigate probable environmental impacts from these undertakings. Its small pond/dam safety mandate provides technical review/approval of impoundment facilities. Flood control and stormwater management protocols/implementations are executed through interagency collaborations. Other approvals by the program include applications for forest harvesting, stream rehabilitations, surface mining operations, landfill operations, and county or municipal capital and maintenance projects.



4,568 acres

approved for urban development projects

Reviews:

49.9%

within 5 business days

98.7%

within 10 business days

MDE Delegated Inspections Authorities Supported

4

(Prince George's County, Laurel, Greenbelt, Bowie)

120 Hrs +

of one-on-one client consultations and collaborations

2023 Program Highlights

That "... progress and achievements are underpinned by collaborations.", is a guiding pillar of District operations. Thus, continuing in 2023, and through recurring engagements with the local development industry - the Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA), consultants, builders, and developers - several administrative protocols were updated to provide greater flexibility and reduce resource expenditure during development phases - Project Phasing prior to final development design phase. Several technical policies were also updated to provide greater clarity and consistency for applications, saving time and budgets, and the Program leveraged its pre-application review process to accelerate applications to approval by reducing submission iterations. The District hosted its first roundtable discussion with land development stakeholders on processes and feedback in September, and provided multiple sessions of one-on-one engagement towards improved client outcomes. Lastly, the Program implemented its electronic payment process for applications, and continues to migrate legacy operations and processes to electronic platforms and workflows.



Welcome to the Team!!!



John Knowles-Kellett, RC&D Program Support Specialist



Shana Burke, RC&D Soil Technician



Isaiah Nance, NRCS Soil Conservationist

And a big welcome as well to...

Khalia Giles, NRCS Soil Conservationist

Chase Kolstrom, RC&D Forester

Vern Crocker, RC&D Soil Technician

Kayla Rawlings, PGSCD Administrative Aide

Mike Montillo, NRCS Conservation Engineering Technician



PRINCE GEORGE'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DISTRICT STAFF

Steven E. Darcey, CPESC, District Manager
 John Tarr, P.E., District Engineer
 Joe Bonanno, P.E., Urban Engineer
 Gail Myers, P.E., Conservation Engineer
 Julie Miller, Urban Engineer
 Kebede Shihamit, Urban Engineer
 Eugene Whitehead, Urban Engineer
 Fiona Thampi, Urban Engineer
 Wade Hampton, District Planner
 Jeanine Nutter, Ag Land Preservation Administrator
 Kim Rush Lynch, Urban Ag Conservation Program Manager
 Kimberly Summers, Administrative Assistant
 Terry Hampton, Office Manager
 Rita Jones, Administrative Aide
 Cedrick Coles, Administrative Aide / Editor
 Kayla Rawlings, Administrative Aide

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 Heather Zdobysz, Soil Conservation Planner



Colleen Kiefer, District Conservationist
 Brian Brookhart, NRCS Southern MD Regional Engineer
 Jacob Koenig, NRCS Conservation Engineering Technician
 Jake Kiessling, NRCS Conservation Engineering Technician
 Mike Montillo, NRCS Conservation Engineering Technician
 Nya Segears, NRCS Soil Conservationist
 Khalia Giles, NRCS Soil Conservationist
 John Knowles-Kellett, RC&D Program Support Specialist
 Shana Burke, RC&D Technician
 Isaiah Nance, NRCS Technician
 Vern Crocker, RC&D Technician
 Lauren Hawkins, NRCS Agricultural Engineer
 Chase Kolstrom, RC&D Forester



Suzanne Curtis Wisnieski, County Executive Director
 Anna Kitzmiller, Program Technician



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