

Howard Soil
Conservation District
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CONSERVATION MATTERS



MARCH 2025

CALENDAR

HSCD Office Closures:

April 18: Good Friday

May 26: Memorial Day

June 19: Juneteenth

Important Cover Crop Dates:

March 1: First day to terminate cover crop

June 3: Deadline to certify termination of cover crop

March 1: Fertilizer Black-out Ends

March 18: Howard Co Mid-Winter Ag Meeting

March 18: National Ag Day

March 20: HoCo Envirothon Training Day

April 12: Howard County GreenFest

April 22: Earth Day

April 29: HoCo Envirothon Competition

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Alleyways with Abby*: Solving the Poop Problem

When I tell non-farmer friends that managing manure occupies a lot of my time, I always get a laugh. Can't I just have folks come in and pick it up for their gardens? I should get paid for that!

Alas, if only it were so easy. My farm is home to 24 horses, and in the winter months we fill a 30-yard dumpster with shavings, soiled hay and manure to the brim every week. I'd need a small army of serious gardeners to empty that load, and then come back the next week, and the next. And I'm only one of the many farms in the area. Still, there should be a better solution. On a weekly basis, my expenses in manure management entail dumpster rental, hauling out, and dumping, often to the tune of a few hundred dollars a week. It's possible to spread some manure as fertilizer if you have the machinery, space and time, while adhering to state (Maryland Department of Agriculture) nutrient guidelines. Composting is another option, but it's also space and time intensive to do it yourself. The Howard County landfill will accept manure to compost, but at least for my operation, this would entail us hauling out 30 yards weekly, and I'd need my own dump truck for that.

There's also the option of using straw bedding, which makes horse manure viable as a fertilizer for mushroom farms, many of which are right over the state line in Pennsylvania. Mushroom

farmers will often defray the cost and haul out your waste for cheap, sometimes even for free. But in my research, the increased cost of straw bedding and labor in stall cleaning far outweighs the decreased haul out fee.

This year, I'm looking into building a manure storage area which the Howard Soil Conservation District will help to cost-share, which will allow me store manure in a more cost-friendly way. This will likely save us from having to haul out weekly and decrease operating costs a bit. But at the scale most boarding farms are creating manure, this is only a partial solution.

I haven't cracked the case yet, but it seems there should be a better pipeline, not only for farms to manage manure, but to do it in a reusable way. Maybe there aren't enough gardeners to visit our farms individually, but with some community organizing and funding, we might find a method to benefit all parties.

A memory sticks with me of the barn where



Above: Fine Idea's manure dumpster in action.

Continued on Page 2

Solving the Poop Problem (Continued from Page 1)

I boarded my horse while I was in graduate school, where a serious enough gardener did visit the farm on a weekly basis. Gardening was only his side gig though. His day job was driving a cab. On his way home, he'd back the cab up to the manure pile and pop the trunk, where he kept a few empty 5 gallon buckets ready to fill. My first thought was always of the back seat passengers catching whiffs from the back — but my second was that if the cab driver had that much energy and resolve, we could certainly find a better way!

* Alleyways with Abby is written by HSCD Associate Supervisor Abby Gibbons

“The nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself.” - Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Ag Rental Survey

Do you rent your agricultural land or lease your land to farmers for their operation?

Howard SCD and Montgomery SCD are collecting information regarding rented agricultural lands and conservation. All information will be used in the development of a workshop that will be held later this year.



Whether you own or rent agricultural land that is utilized for farming, managing these lands is a tremendous responsibility. As a result of farming activities, a farmer may inadvertently cause potential resource concerns. A resource concern is a degradation of a soil, water, air, plant, or animal resource, which impairs the sustainability of that resource. If not properly managed, resource concerns, such as soil erosion or excess nutrients, can become pollutants that negatively impact ponds, streams, and even groundwater.

Both landowners and farm tenants can turn to their local Soil Conservation District (or District) to help address resource concerns on your lands. Your District can provide you with technical assistance and help you explore local, State, and Federal cost-share assistance programs at no-cost. The District can evaluate your property to determine the nature of your resource concern, develop a plan of action for

you (referred to as a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan), and help design a conservation practice that will address the resource issue. These conservation practices are commonly referred to as “Best Management Practices”. Statewide studies show that the implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices on rented lands is much lower than lands that are owned by agricultural producers. The purpose of this survey is to better understand the challenges surrounding Best Management Practice implementation on rented lands. We hope you will take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete and return this survey so that we can better understand these challenges and help the District improve the level of implementation. Your input is vital to this mission and we ask that you please complete the survey. It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

To complete the survey online, please use the QR code to the right or visit:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/de/1FAIpQLScXRAGJYDwhdMyhX8gNx7Eq1urYgYvu8eI2ydcv9MbjwJB61g/viewform>

If you would prefer to fill out a paper copy, please contact Howard or Montgomery Soil Conservation District.



How to Scan the QR Code:
 1. Open camera app on your phone
 2. Hover camera over QR code and a pop-up link will appear
 3. Click on the link provided and the survey will automatically load

HOWARD SCD 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Year at a Glance

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQPs) - Developed/updated 28 SCWQPs to help farmers protect natural resources on 4,792.28 acres. Currently, there are 23,228.3 planned acres in the county.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Worked with 23 farmers to install 62 BMPs to protect natural resources on farmland.

Cover Crops - Provided assistance to 12 farmers. 4546 acres of cover crops were planted in Howard County.

Erosion and Sediment Control - Reviewed 577 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects, protecting 1257 acres of land.

Education and Outreach - Mid-Winter Ag Meeting for farmers; Howard County GreenFest community event; Howard County Fall Farm and Conservation Tour for Elected Officials were among the many outreach events in 2024.

Cover Crops

Cover crops hold nutrients and soil in place over winter, and the diversity plays an important role in soil health.

This year, farmers planted 4546 acres of cover crops in Howard County under Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Cover Crop Program. This does not include the many acres that farmers planted on their own, without cost-share assistance.

The Urban Engineering Specialists in the Howard SCD office helped protect 1257 acres of land from soil being lost and entering streams and other waterways. They did this through the review of 577 erosion and sediment control plans.

What is Erosion and Sediment Control?

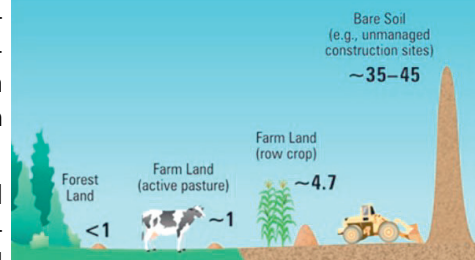
Erosion is the natural wearing-away of land, typically by water or wind. Over time, all land experiences erosion, but bare soil exposed by construction activities is particularly vulnerable. Bare soil erodes at a rate 35-45 times faster than forested land.

Sediment is the soil and other earth materials transported by water or wind after erosion takes place. When rainwater flows across a construction site, it picks up exposed, easily-eroded soil and other debris. If not controlled, this sediment can enter nearby streams and waterways, resulting in harm to aquatic plants and animals, destroyed habitat, pollution of drinking water supplies, and obstruction of navigable rivers.

Erosion and sediment control is a two-part process. The first part, erosion control, aims to reduce the amount of sediment generated from construction activities by minimizing the area disturbed by construction, stabilizing disturbed areas with vegetation or matting, and protecting vulnerable areas such as steep slopes, floodplains, and highly erodible soils. The second part, sediment control, aims to prevent sediment from leaving a construction site by installing perimeter controls such as silt fence or by retaining sediment in a trap or basin. Erosion and sediment controls work together to keep our waterways clean during construction activity.

Typical erosion rates for land-based activities

(soil loss from various land areas, in tons per acre per year)



Education and Outreach

Howard SCD had the opportunity to participate in several outreach and community events including: Howard County Elementary School STEM events, Howard County Farm Bureau's Ag Awareness Day with 7th graders from Folly Quarter Middle, Envirothon (at county and state levels), Howard County GreenFest, and Howard County Fair. We are always grateful to be a part of the conservation education efforts that take place across the county.

HOWARD SCD 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Conservation Efforts

The conservation practices installed by farmers are part of the broader multi-state effort to restore the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. Each county in Maryland has a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) which tracks the nutrient reduction progress being made by the agricultural sector.

Howard County farmers implemented a variety of best management practices this year to improve water quality:

Conservation Practice	Amount
Critical Area Planting	4.0 ac
Fencing: Stream and Other	6530.2 ft
Grassed Waterway	1.28 ac
Heavy Use Area Protection	0.1 ac
High Tunnel	6762 sqft
Pasture and Hay Planting	8.3 ac
Pipeline: Livestock	1523 ft
Roof Runoff Structure	1 ea
Roofs and Covers	1 ea
Structure for Water Control	3 ea
Underground Outlet	580 ft
Waste Storage Facility	1 ea
Watering Facility	7 ea
Water Well	1 ea

Additional conservation practices, not able to be captured by the WIP, were also installed. They included:

Conservation Practice	Amount
Edge Feathering for Wildlife Cover	0.2 ac
Herbaceous Weed Treatment to Create Plant Communities Consistent with the Ecological Site	18.5 ac
Improved Grazing Management for Enhanced Plant Structure and Composition for Wildlife	18.6 ac
Leave Standing Grain Crops Unharvested to Benefit Wildlife	32 ac

Federal, State and Local Funding allocated for Howard County Farmers through various programs administered by the District in 2023:

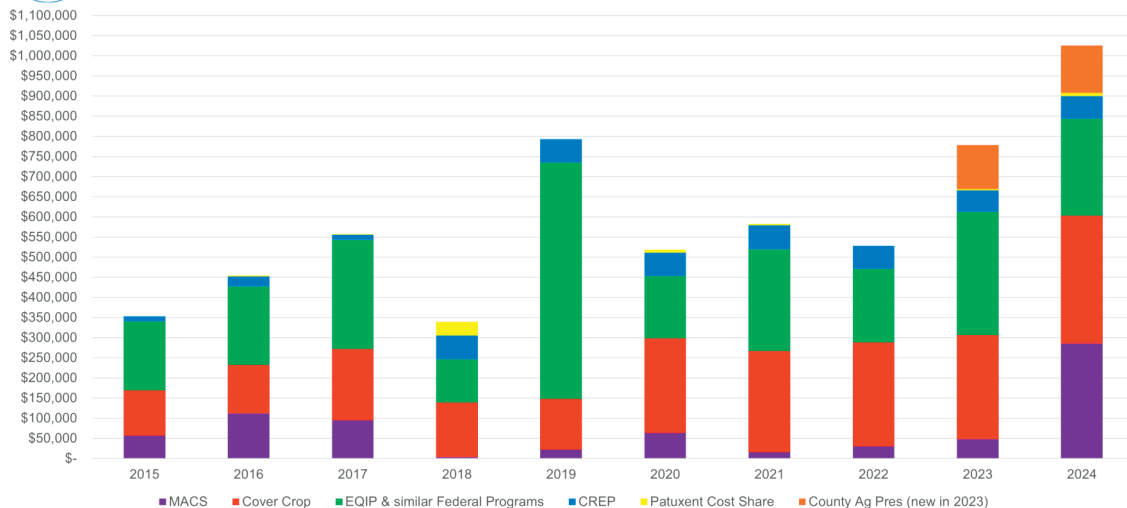
Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share (MACS)	\$284,900
MDA Cover Crop Program	\$318,2200
Federal Funding (other than CREP)	\$240,474
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	\$56,380
Patuxent Cost-Share	\$7,848
County Ag Pres (new in 2023)	\$117,734
Total 2023 Funding for Howard County Farmers	\$1,025,556

(Chart depicted in bar graph below)



CONSERVATION FUNDING for HOWARD COUNTY FARMERS

In addition to providing farmers with technical guidance to protect soil, water & other natural resources, the Howard SCD also helps farmers to access a wide array of financial assistance to implement conservation practices.



HOWARD SCD 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Cooperator of the Year

Howard SCD's Cooperator of the Year award went to Clover Luck Stables, located in Ellicott City, MD. The owners, Stephanie Williams and Matthew Carroll, operate an equestrian training facility that was founded in 2022. As new farm owners, Stephanie and Matthew worked with Howard SCD staff from the very beginning to establish a variety of conservation practices and make improvements to their operation. Some of the practices they have implemented include fencing off streams and wetlands, installing watering troughs and heavy use areas, constructing trails and walkways, and establishing a rotational grazing system. The landowners used a variety of cost-share programs offered through Howard SCD to help defray the expenses associated with all of this conservation work.



Stephanie Williams (left) and Matthew Carroll (center), Clover Luck Stables, receive their award from Justin Brendel (right), HSCD Chairman.

Mid-Winter Ag Meeting

The 2024 Howard County Mid-Winter Agricultural Meeting provided farmers with insight and ideas on federal cost-share opportunities, herbicide resistant weeds, soil cation exchange capacity, tips and lessons learned through University of Maryland's research on transitioning corn and soybean operations to organic while keeping farming viable, and a nutrient management update. The event was attended by 44 farmers and guests.



Above: 2024 Mid-Winter Ag Meeting.

Fall Farm and Conservation Tour

The Fall Farm and Conservation Tour provides an opportunity for elected officials to visit working farms in Howard County, expanding their understanding about the challenges and opportunities farmers experience. It allows elected officials to connect with their local farmers, and helps our representatives understand how the policies they legislate can have a profound impact on family farms.



Three Dozen Daisies owners, Mary and John Wilde share with attendees the story of how their farm came about, where they are going, and the challenges they've faced.

The tour highlighted the diversity and innovation that is integral to all farming operations, and provided participants with a chance to experience a broad spectrum of agriculture in Howard County. The Fall Conservation Tour included stops at Three Dozen Daisies Farm, a relatively new opera-



Attendees walk towards the milking parlor for a tour at Maple Dell Farm.

tion focusing on vegetables and fresh cut flowers; Maple Dell Farm, a multi-generational dairy operation; Daisy Lane Farm, an equine training and boarding facility; and Sharp's at Waterford Farm, an agritourism destination.

The Farm Tour is organized by Howard Soil Conservation District, Howard County Economic Development Authority, and Howard County Farm Bureau. The goal of the Farm Tour is to give policy makers a chance to meet with farmers and discuss important facets of their operations in a hands-on environment. They also get a chance to see many conservation practices that farmers implement to protect local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Cover Crop Program

Reminders concerning spring certification for the 2024-25 MDA Cover Crop Program:

Termination may begin **March 1, 2025**. For those acres planted between November 6-15, these acres cannot be terminated prior to **May 1, 2025**.

Options for end of winter management include green chopping (for on-farm use only), plowing under, or killing by using a burn-down herbicide. Grazing of a cover crop does not qualify as an acceptable spring termination method.

Within two weeks of termination of the cover crop, but **no later than June 3, 2025**, you must certify to the SCD that the cover crop has been destroyed.

Questions about MDA's Cover Crop Program, contact Kristal McCormick, kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov

Spotted Lanternfly

Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) females prefer to lay their **egg masses** on a host tree, however, they may also deposit eggs on a variety of flat surfaces including buildings, trailers, fence posts and vehicles. The eggs are laid in groups of approximately 30-50 and then coated with gray wax. When the wax has dried it can look similarly to a splash of mud making it difficult to notice them. The eggs typically hatch in the spring, usually in the first week of May.

<https://extension.psu.edu/how-to-remove-spotted-lanternfly-eggs#:~:text=You%20can%20fill%20your%20baggy,make%20sure%20you%20kill%20them.>



MDA's Conservation Buffer Initiative

Maryland's Conservation Buffer Initiative offers attractive incentive payments to plant trees next to streams, easy sign-up, and a full range of management options for farmers who want to improve the health of local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

Maryland's 2024-2025 Conservation Buffer Initiative

PRACTICE NAME	RI PRACTICE CODE	ADJACENT LAND USE	PAYMENT (NEW OR IMPROVED)	PAYMENT (EXISTING)	AGREEMENT TERM IN YEARS
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Narrow Grass 10 to 34 ft. width	RI-4a	Pasture	\$1,500/acre	None	5
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Grass 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-5	Pasture	\$2,500/acre	None	5
Watercourse Access Control with LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FENCING: Trees 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-6	Pasture	\$4,500/acre + \$1,000/acre bonus	None	10
Grass Buffer on Watercourse Narrow 10-34 ft. width	RI-7	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$1,000/acre	\$500/acre	5
Grass Buffer on Watercourse 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-8	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$2,000/acre	\$500/acre	5
Forest Buffer on Watercourse (Trees) 35 ft. + width (100 ft. maximum)	RI-10	Cropland, Highly Erodible Land, or Hydric Soils	\$4,000/acre + \$1,000/acre bonus	None	10

Attractive incentive payments to plant riparian forest buffers are available again this year. These payments are on top of the \$4,000 or \$4,500 per acre that you will receive to install the buffer. These incentives include:

*A one-time \$1,000 per acre signing bonus to plant a streamside forest buffer.

*Up to \$300 per acre, per year to help cover maintenance costs for forest buffer health during the first 5 years of the contract.

Howard County Bee City: Creating a Buzz for Pollinators

Howard County Bee City is on a mission to support pollinators and the vital role they play in our ecosystems. As part of the Bee City USA initiative, Howard County is dedicated to creating pollinator-friendly habitats, reducing pesticide use, and raising awareness about native bees and other pollinators. Howard County's Bee City is led by a committee that represents a partnership between local government, non-profits, and businesses.

Pollinators are vital to healthy ecosystems, yet their populations are under threat. Howard County Bee City works alongside residents, organizations, and volunteers to create and enhance habitats, and ensure these essential species thrive.

Howard County Bee City efforts focus on two primary goals:

Raise Awareness: Educating the community on the importance of pollinators, with a special focus on native bees, and their role in supporting biodiversity.

Create Habitats: Promoting pollinator-friendly landscaping with native plants and minimal

pesticide use.

To achieve these goals, Howard County Bee City hosts workshops, community events, and hands-on native planting projects. Some of the notable programs and initiatives are the Trees for Bees Giveaway, Habitat Registration & Native Plant Garden templates, and native bee trading cards.

From small backyard efforts to community-wide projects, everyone can play a role in protecting pollinators. Join the effort by registering your pollinator-friendly garden (and receive a free sign!), reducing pesticide use, or attending one of our educational events.

To learn more and get involved, visit Howard County Bee City (hocobeecity.weebly.com) or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/HcbeecityUSA).

(article written by Julie Costantino)



Bay Wise and Bee City signage. Photo credit: Kate Reilly

Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting: Save the Date

The Howard Soil Conservation District, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), University of Maryland Extension, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will sponsor the annual Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting on Tuesday, March 18th, 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM, at the Howard County Fairgrounds Dining Hall. Registration and a light meal (sponsored by Horizon Farm Credit) will be at 6:00 PM, with the meeting beginning at 6:30 PM. Topics include deer management, slug damage / management (including research data of their effect on soybeans), the right-to-farm and eminent domain, and a Nutrient Management update.

Attendees are eligible to receive two (2) Nutrient Management CEUs.

There is no cost to attend but pre-registration is requested, by Friday, 3/14/25. To pre-register, please call the Howard SCD, 410.313.0680, or email kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov

Manage Stormwater Runoff

You can do several things around your home to slow down the flow of rainwater runoff and put that water to good use.

- * Create a certified Bay-Wise Landscape to help protect the Chesapeake Bay from runoff.
- * Create a rain garden, swale, or vegetated buffer to reduce erosion and help excess water seep slowly and harmlessly into the ground.
- * Use flexible tubing to divert downspout water away from your home's foundation so that it can be absorbed by your lawn, plants, or rain garden.

DON'T MISS:
Survey for those who rent/
lease farmland (pg 2)
Mid-Winter Ag Meeting Info
(pg 7)

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