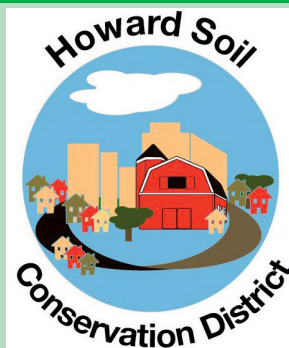


Howard Soil
Conservation District
14735 Frederick Road
Cooksville, MD 21723
410.313.0680
www.howardscd.org

Conservation Matters



June 2020

CALENDAR

June 3: Last day to spring
certify termination of cover
crop for MDA program

June 22 - July 17: MDA Cover
Crop Program
Sign-Up

July 3: Office Closed in Ob-
servation of Independence
Day

August 8-15: Howard Coun-
ty Fair

August 2-4: Maryland Asso-
ciation of Soil Conservation
Districts Annual Meeting

August 15: First day to plant
cover crops under the MDA
Cover Crop Program

September 7: Office Closed
in Observation of Labor Day

Howard SCD Celebrating 75 Years

Howard Soil Conservation District was founded by a group of farmers on May 10, 1945. The soil conservation movement evolved out of the devastation created in the Midwest by the Dust Bowl. Congress established federal policy concerning soil conservation in 1935, including the establishment of the USDA Soil Conservation Service. On February 27, 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a letter to all state governors recommending enactment of soil conservation district legislation. The goal of this legislation was to involve local citizens in the voluntary planning

and installation of conservation practices. Each District would have personal contact with local individual landowners within the community, and would be able to determine the local needs and encourage cooperation on a voluntary basis. The first soil conservation district was established in 1937 in North Carolina, and the first district in Maryland was formed in Kent County on May 11, 1938. Please help us celebrate 75 years of conservation in Howard County by sharing any old photos, articles, or other memorabilia related to our history.

MDA Cover Crop Program

2019-2020 MDA Cover Crop Program: Changes to Spring Certification and Claim for Payment Procedures

During this time of uncertainty, the Howard Soil Conservation District is continuing to serve the community the best we can. As farmers who are enrolled in the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Cover Crop Program terminate their cover crop, we look to make the spring certification and claim for payment process as seamless as possible while following guidelines set forth by Governor Hogan and County Executive Calvin Ball to protect everyone.

There will be no face-to-face interaction. Correspondence will be via phone (410.313.0680) or email (kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov). All

certification will be self-certification by the farmer.

Information needed for spring certification includes FSA Farm and Tract numbers, Field numbers, and the date and method of termination.

The last day to terminate cover crop and report to the District is **June 3, 2020**.

Contact the District, 410.313.0680, with any questions concerning this new process.

2020-2021 MDA Cover Crop Program

Farmers may sign-up for the 2020-2021 Cover Crop Program June 22 through July 17 through the Howard Soil Conservation District office.

To find out more about MDA's Cover Crop Program please call 410.313.0680.

District Operations During the Pandemic

Howard County offices, including Howard Soil Conservation District are currently closed to the public. We apologize for any inconvenience it may cause, the County Executive has taken these precautions to insure public health and safety.

Review of erosion and sediment control plans is still occurring during this time. There are boxes outside the office for drop-off and pick-up of plans.

Conservation plans and engineering designs of agricultural best management practices continue to be developed while the office doors are closed. Agricultural staff are still making farm visits and working with cooperators, but social distancing and other precautions are being observed.

If you have questions or need assistance please call our main line at 410.313.0680.

Missing us between newsletters?
Follow us on social media.

facebook.com/
HowardSoilCon-
servationDistrict



twitter.com/
HowardSCD

instagram.com/
HowardSCD



John Vargo, New District Technician

Hi, my name is John Vargo and I'm a new Engineering Specialist with the Howard Soil Conservation District. I grew up in Waldorf, Md and attended Thomas Stone HS. After graduating I attended Juniata College and received my B.S. in Geology in 2007. I went to work in the oil industry as a field geologist and split my time between California and Alaska working both onshore and offshore drilling projects. I specialized in oil and natural gas, but also worked for a year on deep geothermal wells utilizing steam for electrical production. In 2015 I left the oil industry and started work as a geotechnical engineer/technician overseeing large construction projects in Southern Md. I accepted an offer in 2017 to work for the State of MD as a Soil Conservation Associate in Frederick County. Here I designed and oversaw construction on all types of agricultural related BMP projects. These included watering facilities, Spring Developments, Stream Crossings, Grassed Waterways, Animal Walkways, Roof

Runoff, Waste Storage Closures, and Roofed HUA/Waste Storage facilities. I applied for the Engineering Specialist position in the Howard Soil Conservation District and my start date was March 2nd of this year. I look forward to helping and working with the landowners and producers of Howard County to address resource concerns. I recently bought my first house in New Oxford, Pa and enjoy fly fishing, fly tying, hunting, and traveling in my spare time.



The health of soil, plant, animal and man is one and indivisible. – Albert Howard

Cover Crops in Soil Health

The state of Maryland has been at the forefront of encouraging the planting of cover crops by farmers for years. Through the state's cover crop program, hundreds of thousands of acres are planted each year. The primary goal of Maryland's program is for cover crops to take up excess nutrients into the plants, that otherwise may leach or runoff to surface waters, and eventually, to the Chesapeake Bay. This is a major part of the Chesapeake Bay Improvement strategy.

Cover crops do more than take up and hold any nutrients which may linger in the soil after harvest. They prevent soil erosion, can smother weeds, break insect and disease pest cycles, and maintain soil moisture. A legume cover crop can provide nitrogen to the next crop in a rotation.

One of the best impacts of cover crops is their effect on soil health by adding organic matter. The increase in organic matter, includes not just the above ground plant, but also, the plant roots. For many cover crop species, the root system is as abundant as the biomass on top the soil. The growing roots help to improve soil structure. The roots also provide channels for water to flow, increasing water infiltration. By growing something year round, the soil has increased biological activity. The soil microbes are fed continuously. Fungi thrive and are important for bringing nutrients to the plant roots. As microbes die, they become part of the soil organic matter content too.

Planting a mix of cover crops, a cover crop cocktail, enhances benefits to the soil. Plants with different rooting systems and growth habits provide multiple benefits. The grass in the mixture can scavenge nitrogen. A brassica can scavenge nitrogen and provide large root channels for water infiltration.

By varying species, they provide these benefits over a field's varying soil types and with varying weather conditions, so there will be more likely to enjoy the effects of the cover crop planting.

Cover crop growth as well as the increase in organic matter, sequester carbon which otherwise would be released into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases. The extensive application of cover crops may be a great way to mitigate climate change by sequestering the carbon in the soil in the form of organic matter. A simple practice as cover crop use, can go along way to influence the soil and our whole environment.

To learn more about cover crop opportunities and how they may rejuvenate your field or garden soil, contact the Howard Soil Conservation District, 410.313.0680.

COVER CROPS AT WORK

Increasing soil organic matter



THE TOOLKIT

Cover crops are tools to keep the soil in place, improve soil health, and reduce nutrient pollution from farm fields. The cover crop toolkit includes grasses, brassicas, legumes, and other broadleaf species.

SOIL ORGANIC MATTER

Soil organic matter is decomposed organic material (leaves, roots, microorganisms) that exists in the soil and acts as a reservoir of water and nutrients.



Across several studies, legume cover crops were found to increase levels of soil organic matter by 8 to 14%, and non-legume cover crops were found to increase soil organic matter levels by 4 to 62%.

WATER QUALITY BENEFITS

- Soil organic matter enhances soil processes and properties, and alleviates soil compaction.
- Organic matter also increases water retention capacity and can absorb and filter pollutants in runoff and groundwater.



By increasing soil organic matter, cover crops contribute to enhanced water quality and improved soil water and nutrient conditions.

All data comes from a bibliography compiled by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) and the University of Maryland. This graphic was developed under Cooperative Agreement No. 580691641 awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA made comments and suggestions on the document intended to improve the scientific analysis and technical accuracy of the document. The views expressed in the document are those of the authors and EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this publication.

HOWARD SCD 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Highlights

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQPs) — Developed/updated 44 SCWQPs to help farmers protect natural resources on 4,886.6 acres. Currently, there are 21,897.7 planned acres in the county.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) — Worked with 23 farmers to install 53 BMPs to protect natural resources on farmland.

Cover Crops — Provided assistance to 15 farmers. About 2759 acres of cover crops were planted in Howard County.

Erosion and Sediment Control — Reviewed 919 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects; 251 of these plans were approved to protect 2347 acres of land.

Education Outreach — 2 on-farm sessions of Farm Academy; Mid-Winter Ag Meeting for farmers; Howard County Fall Farm and Conservation Tour for Elected Officials; Envirothon program for high school students; provided support to Howard County Public School's Our Environment in Our Hands program, and Monarch Buddies program; participated in 4 additional community events.

Farm Academy

Farm Academy celebrated its fifth year. Since its start, Farm Academy has grown to include an event for employees as well as guided and self-guided tours at the Howard County Fair. In five years Farm Academy has reached over 300 citizens and employees through the on-



Attendees take a wagon ride tour with farmer Jamie Brown to see first-hand some of the best management practices implemented on the farm.

farm events, and over 2000 people through the fair tours.

The 2019 on-farm fall session of Farm Academy returned to the site of the very

first Farm Academy - Triadelphia Lake View (TLV) Tree Farm. TLV has been in the Brown family for over a century, Jamie being the fifth generation. Triadelphia Lake View Farm was originally a dairy operation, milking 100 cows. But in the late 1980's Jimmy and Linda Brown took a chance, selling the cows and planting

Christmas trees.

Today TLV Tree Farm provides not only Christmas trees but farm-raised meats, including turkeys, chicken, beef and pork, as well as pumpkins, strawberries and vegeta-



Charlie Ashcraft, with TLV, teaching kids and parents about what it takes to grow a pumpkin.

bles. They sell straight from the farm and participate in Howard County Farmer's Markets. TLV also has a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program where people can buy shares of vegetables, meats or eggs. Through the years the family has installed numerous agricultural best management practices to protect natural resources.

Thirty people participated in the Farm Academy this fall. They learned about farming in Howard County, enjoyed a wagon ride tour of the farm, and got an introduction to this unique agricultural operation.

Howard SCD Wins Statewide Award



HSCD receiving their first place award. L-R: Joe Rutter, (Vice-Chair), David Plummer (District Manager), Merhlyn Barnes (Secretary), Nora Crist (Supervisor), Charles Rice (MASCD President), Keith Ohlinger (Treasurer).

The Howard Soil Conservation District was honored last summer to be recognized as the Maryland Outstanding District of the Year by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts at their summer meeting at Turf Valley. The Outstanding District Award, which is sponsored by Mid Atlantic Farm Credit, is based on a variety of criteria related to district operations and conservation assistance. Recipients are selected based on participation in local, state, and national meetings; educa-

tional and outreach programs; soil conservation planning efforts; assistance provided to farmers in the installation of conservation practices; and a variety of reporting and accomplishment data. Part of the selection process is related to how a County is accomplishing the goals under the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

The Chairman of the Howard SCD Board of Supervisors, Justin Brendel, is quick to point out that the award would not have been possible without the outstanding farmers in Howard County, and their strong conservation ethic. "The Howard Soil Conservation District is here to serve the farmers, landowners, developers, and citizens of Howard County. It is through their conservation efforts that we were able to achieve this statewide recognition." By providing technical assistance to landowners and administering sediment and erosion control oversight for new development, the Howard SCD staff strives to protect soil, water, and other natural resources throughout the county.

HOWARD SCD 2019 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:

New Conservation Plans (27) 2352.5 acres

Revised Conservation Plans (17) 2534.1 acres

<u>Best Management Practice</u>	<u>Amount (#)</u>
Roof Runoff	1 each
Critical Area Planting	1.7 acre (8)
Grassed Waterway	2.7 acre (4)
Grade Stabilization Structure	3 each
Heavy Use Area Protection	0.7 acre (7)
Pipeline	1982 l.f. (6)
Mulch	1.2 acre (8)
Watering Facility	6 each
Non-streamside Fence	6494 l.f. (2)
Stream Crossing	1 each
Sediment Control Pond	1 each
Underground Outlet	1,045 l.f. (3)
Subsurface Drainage	1,000 l.f. (1)
High Tunnel	7,000 sq.ft. (1)
Cover Crops	2759 acre



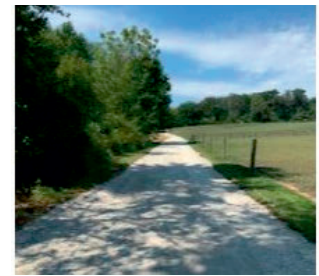
Fencing as a best management practice has many purposes including prescribed grazing, and to control access into hazardous or environmentally sensitive areas.



Ford stream crossing made of precast concrete panels.



Cover crops take up unused nutrients from the root zone, control soil erosion and improve soil health.



Animal trails and walkways provide a stable footing for animals to travel, preventing erosion.

Federal, State and Local Funding allocated for Howard County Farmers through various programs administered by the District in 2019:

Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share (MACS)	\$21,879.00
MDA Cover Crop	\$126,569.00
Federal Funding	\$586,105.29
Patuxent Reservoir Cost-Share	\$63,769.83
Total 2019 Funding for Howard County Farmers	\$798,323.12



Top Left: Grassed waterway, a stabilized area to carry concentrated flow from a landscape, preventing erosion.

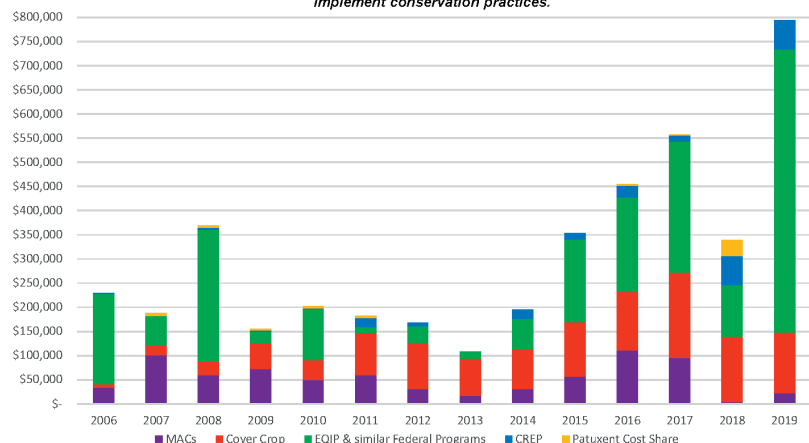


Bottom Left: A waterway after construction. Erosion control matting is installed to protect the center of the waterway until the grass is established.



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 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Howard County Envirothon



Howard County's Envirothon team preparing to add oysters in an effort to build an oyster reef as part of a service learning project at Maryland Envirothon.

Four teams from two schools, Mount Hebron High School and Wilde Lake High School, trained throughout the 2018-19 school year and participated in the Howard County Envirothon competition. There was beautiful weather, but that was just an added bonus to the excitement created by the culmination of the students' hard work.

The winning team, from Mount Hebron High School, represented Howard County at the Maryland Envirothon held at St Mary's College. They had the opportunity to participate in additional training and test their knowledge and skills at a higher level. The team placed 6th in the state. Students also assisted in a service project: the creation of an oyster reef in the St. Mary's River.

To learn more about Envirothon visit www.envirothon.org or www.mdenvirothon.org. You may also contact Kristal McCormick, Howard County Envirothon Coordinator, 410.313.0680 or kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov.

Fall Farm and Conservation Tour

The Fall Farm and Conservation Tour, organized by Howard SCD, Howard County Farm Bureau and Howard County Economic Development Authority (HCEDA) provided legislators and council members with an opportunity to learn more about Howard County agriculture and conservation efforts. Attendees visited five farms to learn about the diverse agriculture of Howard County, the personal stories of the farmers, and the challenges they face with regulation and market influences.



Above Left: Attendees hear from Lynn and Fenby Moore (Larriland Farm) concerning challenges they face as a farm in ag preservation.

Above Right: Council Chair Deb Jung rides a horse at Merry Acres Farm.

Right: Attendees enjoy a scenic view as they learn about marketing, equipment costs and weather concerns of a traditional cash crop farmer at the Brendel family farm.



Community Outreach Events

Howard County Green Fest
Howard County Fair
Howard SCD Cooperators Dinner
Robinson Nature Center Open House
Howard Community College Sustainability Day
Howard County Fall Farm and Conservation Tour for Elected Officials



Displays at outreach events create opportunities for community interaction, letting them know who we are and how we can help; it also allows for educating about the importance of soil and conservation, and the important role of agriculture in Howard County.



An educational guided wagon tour was part of the Cooperator's Dinner held at Mary's Land Farm.

Education and Community Support Efforts

Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting
Our Environment in Our Hands
Howard County Envirothon
Supported Maryland Envirothon
Farm Academy
Monarch (Butterfly) Buddies
Mock interviews at High School
Judge for High School Capstone Projects
Soils presentation at Farmer Brown Camp

Farming for Healthy Soil

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has received a three year, \$1 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund to promote healthy soil practices to farmers.

They are seeking farmers to enroll study fields in any of the following:

- Conservation Tillage
- Multi-Species Cover Crops
- Extended Season Cover Crops
- Prescribed Grazing
- Precision Nutrient Management

The grant will provide participating farmers with technical assistance, as well as financial assistance ranging from \$10 to \$55 per acre, per year to install key soil health practices. Funding for soils data sampling is also available.

If interested please contact:

Alisha Mulkey
Maryland Department of Agriculture
Office of Resource Conservation
410.841.5863 or alisha.mulkey@maryland.gov

Grant partners include the following organizations:



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

**UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND**
EXTENSION
Solutions in your community



“Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals.” - Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, 1949

Farms Can Now Apply for Federal Loans with Farm Bureau Bank

Congress has passed a bill to add additional funding to the Paycheck Protection Program for Small Business Loans. Many farmers are challenged with accessing these funds due to huge backlogs at large national banks and the lack of participation by many small community banks. The demand is enormous, and this round of funding is expected to run out in just a few short days. We encourage you to act now and apply if you want access to the program.

You are encouraged to take advantage of the Farm Bureau Bank member benefit if you are unable to submit applications through your current lender.

Paycheck Protection Program

The Paycheck Protection Program provides loans to eligible businesses, including farms, with 500 or fewer employees to continue to pay employees and cover some overhead costs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sole proprietors, independent contractors and self-employed people are also eligible. Loan payments will be deferred for six months and no collateral or personal guarantees are required. Businesses can apply through any existing SBA7(a) lender or through a

federally insured depository institution, federally insured credit union, or Farm Credit System institution that is participating.

For more information, you can contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) office in Baltimore at 410.962.6195.

Economic Injury Disaster Loan

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan program provides low-interest loans of up to \$2 million to help small businesses affected by COVID-19 cover continuing operating costs. It will be made available for farms in this new round.

Interested farms should apply through the SBA's website right away as funds will likely be exhausted quickly.

Additional COVID-19 Information

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, Maryland Farm Bureau is working to keep you informed about their efforts and how the pandemic is affecting Maryland agriculture. Be sure to check out their COVID-19 update page for additional resources.

BMP Highlight: Animal Trails and Walkways

Animal Trails and Walkways are designed to facilitate animal movement while protecting ecologically sensitive, erosive, or potentially erosive sites. This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to provide or improve access to forage, water, working/ handling facilities or shelter. It helps to improve grazing efficiency and distribution as well.

The Howard Soil Conservation District provides technical assistance and facilitates financial assistance to assist with the design and construction of the animal trails and walkways, and a variety of other practices that can help improve management on your farm and protect soil and water quality.



Top Left: After excavation, geotextile fabric is laid followed by a base of crusher run.

Top Right: A completed trail and walkway with a surface layer of stone dust.

“To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” - Gandhi

Tax Credit for Land in Agricultural Land Preservation Program

A property tax credit is available to landowners who own property enrolled in an agricultural land preservation program. The tax credit applies to property owners enrolled in either the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) or the Howard County Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP). The credit is equal to 75% of any County property tax imposed on the land included in an agricultural preservation easement, but does not apply to any tax assessed on improvements. This property tax credit is available every year, but some agricultural preservation land owners are not aware that they must reapply for the tax credit annually.

If you own land in either a MALPF or ALPP agricultural land preservation easement and have questions about your property tax credit you can contact the County Ag Preservation Program Administrator, Joy Levy, 410.313.5407 (jlevy@howardcountymd.gov). Make sure you look into this issue as soon as possible, because the new tax assessment year will be here before you know it (July 1)! The deadline for application is July 31, but if you want the credit reflected on the July 1 bill, please submit your application to Joy Levy by June 1. This will give the Finance Department time to process the applications prior to the bills going out. Submissions after June 1 will appear on a revised bill.

Applications for the property tax credit can be found on the Howard County Government website: www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Finance/Billing-and-Payments/Real-Property-Taxes/Tax-Credits. Once there, scroll down to Commercial Tax Credits, and it's the first link in that section. If you have dedicated your property to agricultural preservation you deserve every tax credit you can get, so go get your money!

Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (MD-DC BBA3)

January 1st marked the beginning of a 5-year project to map the distribution of breeding birds around the state. An introduction to the project can be found on the Howard County Bird Club website at: <https://howardbirds.website/birding/breeding-bird-atlases/bba3/>. Birds are good indicators of an ecosystem's health because they are abundant, easy to observe, and respond to environmental changes relatively quickly. If suitable habitat is removed from an area, it may impact the nesting success of certain species. The MD-DC BBA3 will expand on our current knowledge of the region's breeding birds and contribute to their conservation and management. You can help! Volunteers look for breeding evidence such as birds carrying food and nest material or maybe even seeing a young fledgling or an actual nest. Do you have owls on your property? Perhaps a Purple Martin colony? This would be valuable information. You may also contact the County Co-coordinators Sue Muller and Dave Ziolkowski at howard@mdbirds.org. They are happy to help you get started!

14735 Frederick Road
Cooksville, MD
21723

**HOWARD SOIL
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**

www.howardscd.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 by phone
410.313.0680 or by email
jkern@howardcountymd.gov

HSCD Board of Supervisors

Justin Brendel, Chairman
Joe Rutter, Vice Chairman
Keith Ohlinger, Treasurer
John Dove, Member
Nora Crist, Member
Ken Clements, Associate Member
Brent Rutley, Associate Member

HSCD Staff

David C. Plummer, District Manager
Charlotte Brewster, District Conservationist
Merhlyn Barnes, Secretary
Michael Calkins, Stormwater Management Specialist
Jackie Kern, Administrative Aide
Kristal McCormick, Engineering Specialist
Kristen Parris, Equine Conservation Planner
Bob Robertson, Engineering Specialist
Melbaliz Santiago, Soil Conservationist
Geof Schoming, Engineering Specialist
John Vargo, Engineering Specialist

The Howard Soil Conservation District (HSCD) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status.