

Conservation Matters



May 2018

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

CALENDAR

**2017-18 Cover Crop
Spring Certification**
Now - June 1st

**Howard County
Envirothon**
May 1

**Farm Academy: County
Employees**
May 3

**Memorial Day: Office
Closed**
May 28

Maryland Envirothon
June 14-15

**2018-19 Cover Crop
Application Sign-Up**
June 21—July 17

The Conservationist

Soil Conservation Districts were created following the Dust Bowl era of the 1930's. After the destructive soil loss and hardships caused by the Dust Bowl, farmers across the country joined together and formed locally led boards that focused on providing conservation guidance and technical assistance on a variety of natural resource issues.

Shortly after the Howard Soil Conservation District was formed, a young farmer named William P. Brendel joined the Board in 1956. Mr. Brendel, known as Bill to most, was the 11th member of the 5-person Board of Supervisors. He replaced Mr. E. Walter Scott, one of the 5 original farmers that founded the Howard SCD in 1945. Mr. Brendel served on the Howard SCD Board of Supervisors for 50 years, becoming the longest serving member of the Board, and leaving quite a legacy.

Having lived through the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, Mr. Brendel was passionate about helping farmers to protect and conserve their land. He was dedicated to helping farmers find solutions to their soil conservation and water quality challenges. "Mr. Brendel was very active in conservation, and led by example on his own land," says J.G. Warfield, the former NRCS District Conservationist and a Howard SCD Board member with Mr. Brendel in the 1980's. "Mr. Brendel lived conservation, and farmers across the entire state respected his values," Warfield noted. Warfield also emphasized what a good grower and producer Mr. Brendel was, in addition to being a leader in the conservation movement. "I think he demonstrated that high quality farming and land stewardship complement each other". Warfield said that Mr. Brendel was an early adopter of no-till and other conservation practices, and also installed the first manure storage structure for swine in the County, and possibly the state.



William E. Barnes and William P. Brendel attend a tour as part of the 30th annual Goodyear Conservation Awards Program. They were two of 106 farmers from across the country chosen to participate in the grand prize conservation award tour in Arizona. (1977)

It is often said that farmers, like Mr. Brendel, were the first conservationists. Very few people understand how to manage and protect the soil, water, and other natural resources like a farmer. A farmer's livelihood is often directly tied to the fertility, productivity, and health of the land they farm. In most cases, they hope to pass the land and its resources on to the next generation. But sometimes farmers can use a little friendly advice to accomplish their conservation goals. Thanks to leaders like Mr. Brendel & Mr. Barnes, The Howard SCD is always available to provide technical guidance, and in some cases financial assistance as well. Mr. Brendel's legacy of conservation continues through his grandson, Justin Brendel, current chairman of the Howard SCD Board of Supervisors.

Snowy Owl in Howard County

For some of us Christmas came early this year when, in mid-December, a juvenile female Snowy Owl took up residence in the Poplar Springs area. Photos of our recent bird, pictured here, can also be found at http://howardbirds.org/photo_page/member_photos/SnowyOwl.htm. An infrequent winter visitor to the mid-Atlantic coast, photo documentation dates this species' last visit to Howard County in 1960 near Clarksville, some 57 years ago. This was only the County's fourth sighting since 1947.

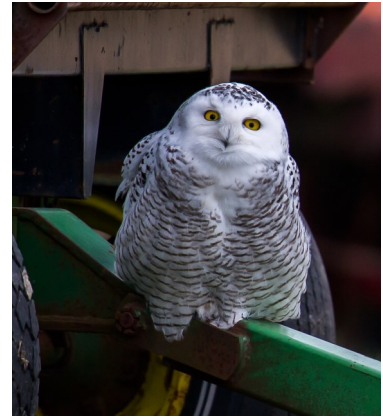
Snowys are not your secretive nighttime forest owl. Observers find them day long in open country, often on the ground or atop low landscape features. Our visitor was no different, having been found sitting in soy bean stubble, on an air field, a fence post, shed, horse trailer, and hay wagon tongue. From multiple social media posts, <https://www.facebook.com/Howard-County-Bird-Club-127336900624172/>, it would seem the bird made the rounds with several pictures posted along with numerous happy comments.

These predators are versatile feeders

taking eider and gulls to lemmings in their arctic tundra breeding and wintering grounds. While not a migrant, winter irruptions of varying numbers occur from time to time with recent major dispersions of young-of-the-year birds in 2013-14 and again this passing winter.

Nesting success depends on adults finding healthy populations of lemmings. In very poor years, pairs may not nest. Southward irruptions, once thought to occur due to scarcity of food, may instead, be the result of just the opposite. Current thinking is that in plentiful years, older chicks do not have to cannibalize younger siblings to survive, resulting in greater numbers of fledglings that disperse southward (<https://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>).

Ongoing "tagging" of Snowy Owls using cellphone telemetry (<https://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>), starting with the 2013-14 irruption, suggests that some may set up winter hunting ranges (MI), centered by a central feature such as a barn roof. While reports came in over several weeks it was not readily apparent that our bird settled into such a routine.



Snowy Owl
Photo Credit to Susan Earp

Four year-round species of owl: Great Horned, Barred, Barn, and Eastern Screech may nest here in Howard County. Though, during our winter, as many as eight species may be found. Along with these four residents: the nonchalant Snowy, and secretive Long-eared, Short-eared, and little Saw-whet Owl may move south in the fall and settle into suitable winter habitat. You can report observations and ask questions about owls and other birds on the Facebook page above or with an email to : howardbirds@howardbirds.org

Howard SCD Poster Contest

The Howard SCD will be sponsoring a countywide poster contest for students, Kindergarten through Grade 12. Poster entries will be divided into 5 classes:

- Class I: Kindergarten and First Grade
- Class II: Second and Third Grades
- Class III: Fourth - Sixth Grades
- Class IV: Seventh - Ninth Grades
- Class V: Tenth - Twelfth Grades

Entries will be judged at the Howard SCD Board meeting in May. Prizes will be awarded to the top three entries overall for each class / category. The winners will be notified by letter.

The first place winner from each

class / category will then be submitted to the State contest. Entries for the State contest will be judged at the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) meeting in July. State winners will be notified by letter as to the time and place for accepting their award. Winners of the State poster contest will be submitted to the National Association of Conservation District's Auxiliary contest.

The theme for the poster contest is "**Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home**". For more information about the contest and to print an entry form visit: [www.nacdnet.org/general-](http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/)

[resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/](http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/)

Poster entries can be any size between 8 1/2" x 11" and 22" x 28". No commercial advertisements may appear on the poster. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the entries:

Conservation message (theme)	50%
Visual effectiveness	30%
Originality	10%
Universal Appeal	10%

Please return any and all entries by Friday, May 18th to the Howard Soil Conservation District office.

HOWARD SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Highlights

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQPs)—Developed/updated 59 SCWQPs to help farmers protect natural resources on 5,735 acres. Currently, there are 18,774.8 planned acres in the county.

Best Management Practices (BMPs)—Worked with farmers to install 47 BMPs to protect natural resources on farmland.

Cover Crops—Provided assistance to 15 farmers. 2,522.3 acres of cover crops were planted in Howard County during the 2017-2018 planting season.

Erosion and Sediment Control—Reviewed 1849 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects; 535 of these plans were approved to protect 5646 acres of land.

Education Outreach – 2 on-farm sessions and a new County Fair edition of Farm Academy; Mid-Winter Ag Meeting for farmers; Envirothon program for high school students; provided support to Howard County Public School's Our Environment in Our Hands program for 4th graders; participated in 6 additional community events.

Farm Academy

Farm Academy, an informal educational program initiated by County Executive Kittleman in an effort to create more understanding and better relationships between farmers and non-ag neighbors, continued in its third year. A Spring session was held for Howard County government employees to educate and better prepare them when assisting citizens. A Fall event, for the public, was held at Merry Acres Farm, a premiere horse boarding facility. Their operation also includes corn, soybeans, small grains and hay. They are conservation minded, having installed many best management practices on their farm.

Farm Academy tours 30-45 minutes in length were held at the 2017 Howard County Fair.



Farm Academy was held on Merry Acres Farm, owned by Howie and Chris Feaga.

Howard County Envirothon

The 2017 Howard County Envirothon was held at the Howard County Conservancy. Teams from two schools studied in preparation for the event. Congratulations to the winning team from Glenelg Country School.

If interested in learning more about the Envirothon program contact Howard County Envirothon Coordinator, Kristal McCormick, kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov



Our Environment in Our Hands

Our Environment in Our Hands is designed for fourth grade students in select Howard County elementary schools. Over the past nine years, the program has been revised to support MD Environmental Literacy Standards, as well as to align with MD Science Standards. The program is currently able to support six (6) Title I schools, at no cost to the schools.

This environmental field experience, held on the Living Farm Heritage Museum property, is a full day experience where students conduct research and investigations focusing on two main components: Hydrosphere and Geosphere. Understanding the Earth's systems and how they interact is a key component of the fifth-grade science curriculum, and this experience helps the fourth graders connect what they are currently learning to what they will be learning next year. This experience serves as an anchor to support two years of their science learning.



Michael Calkins, Howard SCD Conservation Planner, facilitates a discussion of comparing the results from the students' soil investigations.

HOWARD SCD 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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 (35) 3824.8 acres

Revised Conservation Plans (24) 1910.2 acres

<u>Best Management Practice</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Access Control	(1) 1 each
Critical Area Planting	(3) 0.3 acre
Grassed Waterway	(1) 0.4 acre
Grade Stabilization Structure	(1) 1 each
Heavy Use Area Protection	(3) 0.3 acre
Pipeline	(2) 625 l.f.
Mulch	(3) 0.3 acre
Watering Facility	(3) 3 each
Fence	(8) 6069 l.f.
Forage & Biomass Planting	(4) 15 acres
Prescribed Grazing	(4) 26 acres
Conservation Crop Rotation	(7) 94 acres
Residue & Tillage Management, No-till	(7) 94 acres

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

Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share (MACS) \$ 94,862

MDA Cover Crop \$177,425

Federal Funding \$270,550

Patuxent Reservoir Cost-Share \$ 1,240

Total 2017 Funding for Howard County Farmers \$544,077



Watering troughs provide clean drinking water for animals.



Grassed waterway to reduce crop field erosion.



Stream crossing to allow animals to access pastures on the other side of the stream with minimal disturbance to the stream corridor.

HOWARD SCD 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

In addition to assisting farmers with their conservation initiatives, the Howard SCD is also very active in outreach and education to the agricultural community, students and the general public. These efforts are critical to promoting a better understanding of our soil, water, and other natural resources.

Community Outreach Events



Howard County GreenFest

Farm-City Film Festival

Howard County Fair

Howard County Farmers Market

Howard SCD Cooperators Dinner

Robinson Nature Center Open House

University of Maryland College of Agriculture Open



View of a waterway during the conservation wagon tour at the HSCD Cooperator Dinner.

Education and Community Support Efforts

Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting

Our Environment in Our Hands

Howard County Envirothon

Supported Maryland Envirothon

Supported NCF Envirothon

Farm Academy

Mock interviews at High School

Judge for High School Ag Class

Presentation to High School Class

Soils presentation at Farmer Brown Camp

Soils presentation to Maryland Christmas Tree Growers

Presentation to Watershed Academy

Composter presentation at Days End

Presentation to horse owners at New World Stables

Participated in the County Executive's Ag Roundtable



Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting.



Through our many education outreach efforts we have reached more than 3,000 people.



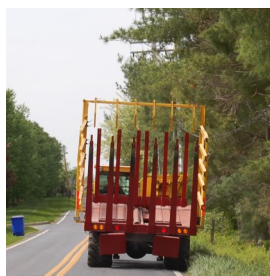
UMD College of Ag Open House attendees.

Roadside Trees & Farm Equipment

Following the County Executive's 2017 Ag Roundtable, Howard SCD took on the initiative of helping farmers identify problem roads, with low-hanging branches and the concern while moving large equipment.

A reporting form was created and placed on our website to provide farmers a place to send locations where there are issues.

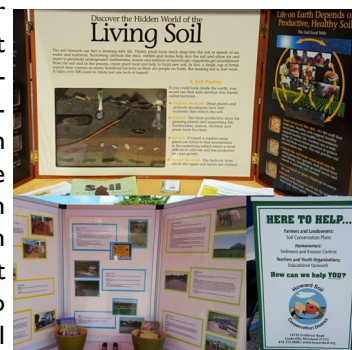
An informational video about this problem was created and is available at <https://youtu.be/tm0lIn9rlzc> or on our website.



Hay stack wagon travels down a Howard County road.

Howard County Farmers Market

Howard SCD was invited to attend the Howard County Farmers Market at Miller Branch Library in Ellicott City to reach out to attendees, and discuss water quality and soil health issues. We even made sure to educate them on the many conservation practices and steps that farmers are taking to protect our natural resources.



Howard SCD Cooperator: Suzanne Kingsbury

The Howard Soil Conservation District offers a variety of assistance to our cooperators in the agricultural community, including technical guidance with conservation practices and access to funding assistance through cost share programs. One of our recent projects involved assisting a small horse farm operation in Glenelg, Maryland.



The Kingsburys bought their 10-acre, beautiful farmette in western Howard County on a whim. Their daughter is an avid equestrian who was always trying to get them to buy a horse place – but they were happy in their old home and content to board their horse. “It’s a good thing we didn’t know how much work is involved in running even a small horse operation, as we probably would have shied away from this opportunity.” But, ignorance is bliss – and

they’ve never been lazy or afraid of rolling up their sleeves. With this being their first farm, they knew they had a lot to learn. “There were many decisions to make and one of the biggest problems was that we didn’t know the land yet – drainage, erosion, quality of the pasture.” They were also assessing such issues as how often they would need to mow, how often to harrow, where to put a sacrifice lot, where to put the arena, what to do with manure? Did they have enough land to spread manure – would composting be a better option? “At the Horse Expo in Timonium, I stopped by the Howard Soil Conservation District booth and saw that they had informational pamphlets on many of the issues I was researching. As it turned out, I knew someone that worked there and gave her a call.”



One of the first steps the Howard Soil Conservation District takes is to work with a landowner to develop a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan that meets the owner’s objectives for their operation. In this instance, the Kingsburys.

“On a frigid day in January 2017, Kristen Parris came out to assess the property and asked if I would like to develop a Soil Conservation Plan. I had no idea what that was, what the



process would entail, or how such a plan could help me establish best practices for the property. It detailed the soil and water dynamics of our property – and this information was vital in helping us decide where to install our ring. Kristen explained that there was cost-share funding assistance available for many of the initiatives I was exploring. The process in dealing with the Howard Soil Conservation District couldn’t have been easier. We are impressed by the expertise of the people at the Howard Soil Conservation District, as well as their accessibility and willingness to share ideas and solutions and the manner in which they administer the various available cost-sharing programs. They really do make it easy. We’ve certainly benefited from the collaboration, and look forward to our future partnership.”

“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”

— Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*

Agricultural Certainty Program

In 2013, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation to establish a voluntary Agricultural Certainty Program that will give Maryland farmers a 10-year exemption from new environmental laws and regulations in return for installing best management practices in order to meet local or Chesapeake Bay Total

Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) goals ahead of schedule.

The program allows participating farmers to conduct business in a predictable regulatory setting, while providing certainty that agricultural pollution controls are being implemented. Farmers must control all

nutrient and sediment problems on farms using a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan and a current Nutrient Management Plan.

For additional information you can visit: http://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/agricultural_certainty_program.aspx

Farm Stewardship Certification & Assessment Program

The Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) was established in 2010 by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD). This unique program recognizes and certifies farmers who have demonstrated that they are good stewards of their farmland and related natural resources. The

program provides qualifying farmers with three-year waivers from state nutrient management inspections and links farmers with new resources and conservation programs.

By recognizing farmers with a strong conservation history, FSCAP aims to encourage even more Maryland farmers to achieve certification and

participate in new conservation programs, thus strengthening land conservation practices in the state and improving water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information contact Howard SCD, 410.313.0680

Cover Crop Cost-Share Program

2017-2018 Program

For those farmers who fall certified their cover crop acres under the Maryland Department of Agriculture Cover Crop Cost-Share Program, kill-down of cover crop is currently underway. June 1st is the last day to report and spring certify the acres in order to receive payment.

2018-2019 Program

Sign-up for the Maryland Department of Agriculture Cover Crop Cost-Share Program will begin June 21st and run through July 17th.

Planting Requirements

Eligible crops may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage after becoming well established. Manure may be applied in the fall following Maryland's nutrient management requirements. All cover crops must be planted by early November

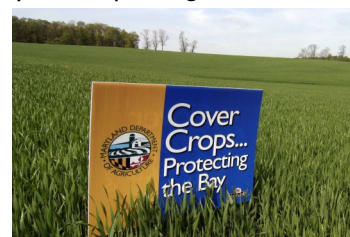
to qualify for payment and ensure their success. Farmers must certify their cover crop with the soil conservation district within one week of planting and after kill down or suppression, which takes place between March 1 and June 1. Howard Soil Conservation District will conduct field checks on a percentage of certified acres to verify program compliance.

Eligible Cover Crop species include cereal grains (wheat/spelt, rye, barley, triticale, spring oats, ryegrass and canola/rape), forage radish, and legumes* (red clover, Austrian winter pea, hairy vetch). *Legumes must be planted with a cereal grain as part of a mix.

Guidelines

- Plant cover crops after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco or vegetables.

- There is a five-acre minimum. There are no acreage caps.
- All seed purchased must be tested and labeled following Maryland Seed Law and Regulations.
- Seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent and no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.
- Homegrown seed must be tested for germination and noxious weeds by the Maryland State Seed Laboratory before planting.



For more information contact Kristal McCormick, 410.313.0680 or kmcormick@howardcountymd.gov

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Cooksville, MD
21723

**HOWARD SOIL
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**

www.howardscd.org

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