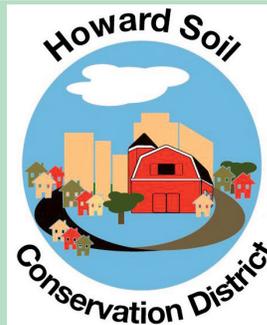


Howard Soil  
Conservation District  
14735 Frederick Road  
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# Conservation Matters



DECEMBER 2019

## CALENDAR

**HSCD Office Holiday Closures:**

**December 25**

**January 1**

**January 20**

**February 17**

**February 3-4: Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) Winter Meeting in Annapolis**

**February 20: Tri-County Agronomy Meeting**

**March 1: Start Spring termination for MDA Cover Crop Program**

### SAVE THE DATE

**Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting  
Late February or Early March**

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## Howard SCD Bids Farewell to Wes Earp

After 44+ years of dedicated service to the farmers of Howard County, Engineering Specialist Wes Earp is retiring to greener pastures. Wes started his tenure with the Howard Soil Conservation District in March of 1975, shortly after graduating from UMBC with a Bachelors Degree in Biology. Throughout his career Wes has been the go-to guy whenever farmers and landowners needed technical assistance with implementing conservation practices. He has designed and helped build just about every conservation practice imaginable over the last 40 years, and has been a tremendous resource to our cooperators in the agricultural community.

The Howard SCD honored Wes at our recent Co-operators Dinner, held at Mary's Land Farm in September. In recognition of his accomplishments and dedicated service to Howard County residents, Wes was presented with the District's Contribution to Conservation Award by Howard SCD Chairman

Justin Brendel. In addition, Wes also received a Governor's Citation from the Maryland Department of Agriculture for his lifelong commitment to helping farmers protect the water quality of our local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.



Wes Earp, the early years.

Wes will be greatly missed by all of us at the Howard SCD. We wish him all the best in retirement and we thank him for sharing his wisdom, expertise, and friendship with us for the last few decades! Good Luck Wes!!

## 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 this 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; educational 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.

## Meet Howard SCD Intern: Lara Szabo-Banicz

Howard Soil Conservation District has a high school intern this year through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Student Conservation Leadership Council. Student Conservation Leadership Council is an innovative volunteer program that provides participants with opportunities in natural resource management and land conservation. Keep reading to learn about our intern in her own words.



HSCD intern Lara Szabo-Banicz

Hi, my name's Lara and I'm interning at the Howard Soil Conservation District this year! I'm currently a senior at Mt. Hebron High School and am enrolled in the Intern/

Mentor G/T class where students attend an internship and write a research paper on a topic of their choice. I became familiar with the SCD through the Envirothon, an environmentally-focused academic competition, and was immediately interested in the work they do! Beside my love for the environment, I'm the captain of the Varsity Volleyball Team at my school.

I am interested in studying agriculture engineering or sustainable agriculture in college, so this is a perfect way for me to get hands-on experience! At the internship, I will help with various projects like community outreach and promoting Envirothon, and observe work done in the field.

## Howard County FFA Livestock Evaluation Team

It has been quite a year for the Howard County FFA. This group ended their first year on yet another high note. The Livestock Evaluation Team earned first place at the State Contest held in Washington County.

During this event, FFA members are challenged to evaluate marketable stock based on current business and industry standards, while developing solid technical and business skills needed to excel in their chosen profession when they participate in the Livestock Evaluation CDE (Career Development Event). Participants evaluate classes of breeding and market beef, sheep, swine and goats according to the latest USDA market grades and cutability. They then provide oral reasons for their selections.

This winning team consisted of Colby Hough, Mackenzie Hereth, Kelly Spicer, and Kevin Spicer. This team of four

then went on to represent Maryland at the 92<sup>nd</sup> National FFA Convention, held October 30 through November 3 in Indianapolis. The team placed 6th overall in the nation, and earned the gold medal. Kelly Spicer was 3rd overall individual, earning a gold medal. Colby Hough and Kevin Spicer also earned gold medals. And Mackenzie Hereth earned a silver medal.

Congratulations to these amazing students for an outstanding first year!



Howard County FFA Livestock Evaluation Team: (Left to Right) Kevin Spicer, Mackenzie Hereth, Kelly Spicer, and Colby Hough

## BMP Highlight: Stream Crossing

A stream crossing is a stabilized travel way across an intermittent or perennial watercourse for people, livestock, equipment or vehicles. They improve water quality by helping to control streambank and streambed erosion, and reducing nutrient and sediment pollution. This practice typically employs structures that match site and user requirements such as fords, bridges, or culverts.



An example of a ford style stream crossing.

Streams can often be crossed easily with a ford or culvert. Many operations have areas where animals or equipment cross streams but without a stabilized stream bed designed to handle regular traffic. These areas are eroded by storm flows and use, creat-

ing a constant sediment problem.

Stream crossings are often used with fencing, which is designed to limit animal access to streams, wetlands, or sensitive areas. This combination can have major benefits for water quality, and improve herd health and farm efficiency.

The Howard Soil Conservation District provides technical guidance and facilitates financial assistance to assist with the design and construction of stream crossings, stream fencing, and a variety of other practices that can help improve management of your farm and water quality.



An example of a culvert style stream crossing.

## Howard County Receives Awards at MASCD



Charles Rice (center), MASCD President, presents Danielle Bauer and Keith Ohlinger (right) with the MASCD Outstanding Contribution Award.

Keith Ohlinger, Howard Soil Conservation District Treasurer, and Danielle Bauer, Howard County native and former Programs and Public Relations Director, Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) were awarded the MASCD Outstanding Contribution Award at the MASCD Annual Meeting in Turf Valley this summer.

Keith and Danielle were recognized for their tireless efforts working for the mental health of the agriculture community. They were the driving forces to bring mental health awareness workshops to the agriculture community in an effort to address the rising suicide rates among farmers and to help farmers and agency staff recognize some of the signs associated with depression and mental health issues.

Across the state, four workshops were held for farm families and those professionals who work with and support farmers. The workshops included training on identifying severe mental stress and other mental health concerns. Individuals who attended gained a better understanding of mental illness, and tools that can be applied with anyone in their lives that may be struggling.

Howard Soil Conservation District (HSCD) is very pleased to have Nora Crist as a new Supervisor, and we appreciate her commitment to promoting our conservation programs and mission. Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) also recognized her commitment and awarded Nora with the Outstanding New Supervisor Award.

With a background in farm markets and agritourism, Nora brings a different, and welcomed perspective to the HSCD Board of Supervisors - to the discussions, and decisions being made. Nora's family has a long history of farming and conservation in Howard County.

"I am not sure the public realizes all the conservation efforts farmers are making, and the benefits these projects have for the Bay" Nora said. This was one of the issues that interested her most about the Howard SCD, to learn more about the programs and how farmers can use them to improve their operations and help protect the environment. "My family has farmed in Howard County a long time, and I am planning on continuing that tradition", she said. "And conservation is an important part of our future".



Charles Rice, MASCD President presents Nora Crist, HSCD Supervisor with MASCD's Outstanding New Supervisor Award.

## Cooperator Highlight: Dave Derenick

The Howard Soil Conservation District (HSCD) 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 cattle and horse operation in Woodbine, Maryland.

The Derenicks bought their 20-acre farm in 2014. They had always dreamed of raising livestock, and they wanted their kids to experience a farm life upbringing with all the responsibilities that come with raising livestock. Dave's wife Jessica has owned horses for years and she was elated to finally bring them home and have them in her backyard.



A pressure-fed watering trough installed for livestock.

Very soon after buying their farm, the Derenicks reached out to the HSCD for guidance and setting up their pastures and protecting the stream that flows through their property. One of the first steps the District takes is to work with the landowner to develop a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan that meets the owner's objectives for their operation. For the Derenicks, they were interested in

transitioning some of the crop fields into pasture, planting trees, fencing out the stream, installing watering troughs and a stream crossing to access pasture on either side of the stream. With help from the District and federal cost-share program they have installed forest buffers, two pressure fed watering troughs, livestock pipeline, heavy use areas, a ford stream crossing, and prescribed grazing. They have also utilized federal cost-share to help offset some of the costs that come with transitioning crop fields to pasture.



The above photo shows a riparian forest buffer, stream fencing and a stream crossing. All projects were installed with the assistance of HSCD and various cost-share programs.

"Our relationship with the District started with drafting a conservation plan" explained Dave Derenick. "We were impressed with the technical and financial support available to farm operators." The Derenicks have been very happy with their collaboration with the District and look forward to their future partnership. For all their conservation efforts over the past few years the Derenicks were recognized as the District's 2018 Cooperator of the Year.

## Howard Soil Conservation

The Howard Soil Conservation District hosted the 2019 Cooperators Dinner at Mary's Land Farm in Clarksville on September 5, 2019. Hosts Tom and Rosa Cunningham welcomed about 120 visitors to their farm to celebrate the conservation efforts of County farmers. The Cunninghams have added a variety of features to the farm over the past several years, including the new pavilion in which the dinner was held. The entire Cunningham family is involved in farm operations, and family members helped lead the hay wagon tours of the farm that featured many interesting and innovative practices.

Prior to the Cunningham's purchase, the farm on Sheppard Lane was a traditional operation used mainly for production of grain crops such as corn, wheat, and soybeans, as well as some hay. The Cunningham family has dramatically expanded and diversified the operation, and many of these changes were on display for attendees to see and experience. The farm now produces chicken and duck eggs, poultry, pork, beef, and lamb. Greenhouses are also currently under construction to provide growing space for a variety of vegetables which will be sold directly to the public on the farm.

The new Farm Store offers all of the meat and eggs produced right on the farm. This new enterprise provides customers with an opportunity to actually experience the farm where their food is produced and feel a connection with the land and the farm operation. The Farm Store also offers a premier selection of Secolari Artisan Olive Oils, Vinegars, Sauces, and Seasonings, which are prized for their gourmet qualities.

In addition to all of the new and innovative food production operations taking place at Mary's Land Farm there are also



One stop on the tour was the high tunnel. A Mary's Land Farm employee explains the use of the high tunnel, and what crops they grow in it.

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Above Left: Children looking on, preparing for the noise of the pumpkin chunkin.



Above Right: Dairy farmer David Patrick and granddaughter Caitlin Patrick enjoy some quality time.



Right: There was something for all ages during the wagon ride tour of Mary's Land Farm.

a variety of conservation efforts. The Cunninghams have incorporated composting methods to convert their manures into a recycled product for building topsoil and improving soil health in their pastures. They have constructed a solar array to reduce electricity costs on the farm. They also employ contour farming practices and have planted hundreds of trees to protect the tributary of the Middle Patuxent River that flows through their property. The family strives to take a holistic approach to their land stewardship as well as the animal production aspects of their operation.

Every year the Howard SCD presents conservation awards to individuals that have made significant commitments to protecting natural resources and promoting agriculture and conservation. This year the District also had the opportunity to present a special award for the Outstanding Contribution by a Youth. This award was originally presented by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) at their annual banquet in August at Turf Valley. However, because the banquet coincided with the Howard County Fair the award recipient was unable to make the banquet and receive her award. The Chairman of the Howard Soil Conservation District



HSCD Chairman Justin Brendel presents the MASCD Outstanding Contribution by a Youth Award to Ellie Feaga.

## District's Cooperator Dinner

Board of Supervisors, Justin Brendel presented the Outstanding Contribution by a Youth award to Miss Ellie Feaga. Ellie has worked with the District and other agencies to expand the educational outreach of the Farm Academy program at the Howard County Fair. Through her efforts with 4-H, Ellie has helped to educate students and the general public about the livestock featured at the Fair by creating a self-guided tour with information about a variety of animals.

Howard SCD also presented the coveted Cooperator of the Year Award, which goes to the farmer that has made significant efforts to implement conservation practices on their property. Mr. Brendel presented this year's Cooperator of the Year Award to David Derenick, who operates a small horse farm in Woodbine. Mr. Derenick began working with the Howard SCD in the early stages of developing his farm operation. He developed a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan with the District's help and immediately began implementing the conservation recommendations contained within the plan. He fenced off his streams and planted forest buffers along them using the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). He is also using rotational grazing to manage and maintain his pastures, and has participated in the USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to construct stream crossings, heavy use areas, and watering troughs. His conservation efforts have been exemplary, and well deserving of the Cooperator of the Year recognition.

The District also recognized two conservationists that have spent their careers helping farmers implement sound practices and educating the public about agriculture and conservation issues.



Attendees socializing with friends, old and new, and enjoying the wonderful evening.

Both gentlemen are retiring this fall, and in addition to receiving the District's

Contribution to Conservation Award, they also received Governor's Citations from the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

The first recipient was Mr. Chuck Schuster, who has worked for the University of Maryland Extension Service and as an agricultural educator in Carroll County. Chuck has been an invaluable resource for farmers, landscapers, students, and the general public for 30+ years. As a horticultural specialist with UM Extension, Chuck always made himself available for field visits to help farmers, nursery owners, orchard operators, or anyone he could with soil health, insect and disease, invasive species, and a wide array of other topics. Although he covered Howard, Montgomery, and Frederick Counties, Chuck provided assistance wherever it was needed. He was an incredible resource and he will be greatly missed. Adam Lyon from Maryland Department of Agriculture presented Chuck with the Governor's Citation for his lifelong commitment to education and assistance to the agricultural community.



Adam Lyon, Maryland Department of Agriculture Patuxent Area Coordinator, presents Chuck Schuster with a Governor's Citation for his years of service.

The final award recipient of the night went to the District's longest serving employee, Wes Earp. Mr. Earp started with Howard SCD in March of 1975, and has been helping farmers ever since. The majority of the conservation practices constructed in Howard County over the last 40+ years involved Wes and his diligent efforts to promote land stewardship in Howard County. Wes has been involved in the survey, design, and construction of ponds, grassed waterways, stream crossings, watering troughs, and hundreds of other practices to help farmers protect their soil, water, and other natural resources. In his 44 years Wes has established himself as the go-to resource for information related to conservation practices and protecting our soil and water for future generations, and he too will be greatly missed.



HSCD Chairman Justin Brendel presents an award to Wes Earp in recognition of his years of outstanding service.

## USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Howard Soil Conservation District is a partnership of local, state and federal agencies working together to address conservation opportunities for local farmers. One of the partners in this effort is the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to farmers through a variety of conservation programs.

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.

NRCS financial assistance programs include the following: The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation. NRCS administers the AMA conservation provisions while the Agricultural Marketing Service and the

Risk Management Agency implement other provisions under AMA.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance - the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

NRCS works in partnership with the local soil conservation districts and the Maryland Department of Agriculture to provide conservation technical assistance to landowners to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources and to help landowners make sound natural resource management decisions on private land.

## Agricultural Conservation Leasing

When it comes to leased farmland, it can be challenging for parties to implement conservation practices. Conservation practices tend to be less common on leased acres for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to, instability in the leasing relationship, poor communication between landowners and farmers, and a lack of knowledge of practices and funding opportunities. In an effort to address these factors, the Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI) and the Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc. (Hughes Center) created the Agricultural Conservation Leasing Guide (available for download at [umaglaw.org](http://umaglaw.org)). Last winter, ALEI and the Hughes Center educated agricultural service providers, farmers and landowners, at statewide workshops, on how to use a lease to support on-farm conservation. The project was supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number ENE18-151.

The Leasing Guide is a tool for both non-operating landowners and farmers. The first step in this process for most leasing parties is to contemplate and communicate their goals for the farming operation. The Leasing Guide contains communication strategies and tools to help parties take these vital first steps. For landowners who are unfamiliar with agriculture and/or on-farm conservation practices, the Leasing Guide contains an explanation of how the term of a

lease can impact conservation, resource information for agricultural service providers, and descriptions of commonly used conservation practices. There are also considerations and sample lease language for conservation practices, useful for both landowners and farmers, within the Leasing Guide.

According to Sarah Everhart, Managing Director, ALEI, University of Maryland Carey Law School:

“We have tried to make it as easy as possible for folks to use a lease to both protect themselves and support the use of best management practices on the farm. We heard from many farmers that the maintenance of best management practices can be an unwelcome and often uncompensated addition to a farmer’s workload, so we included numerous ways to use lease language to equitably allocate responsibilities related to these practices.”

In addition to the many agricultural service providers (Soil Conservation District staff, University of Maryland Extension, NRCS, Land Trust professionals, etc.) who are knowledgeable about this valuable resource, ALEI and Hughes Center are available to offer technical support and educational resources (leasing resources are available for download on the Hughes Center website [go.umd.edu/conservationleasing](http://go.umd.edu/conservationleasing)). Anyone with questions about this project can contact Sarah Everhart, 410-458-2475, [severhart@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:severhart@law.umaryland.edu)

## 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 provided Legislators and Council members with an opportunity to learn more about Howard County agriculture and conservation efforts.

The first stop of the tour was Brendel Farms, where attendees learned about grain production, equipment costs, grain markets, and some of the challenges facing commodity grain farmers.



Justin Brendel educates the group about crops, costs, markets and equipment.



Lynn and Fenby Moore talk to participants about pesticide use, irrigation and issues ag pres farms face.

The next stop was Larriland Farm, where the Moore family provided the audience with information on produce, agritourism, pesticides, and issues facing ag pres farms. The Agricultural Preservation Program is supposed to limit development, but some farmers feel it is being used to impose many more restrictions on participating farms.

At Mary's Land Farm, the Cunningham family welcomed us and shared their story with the at-



Tom Cunningham explains the background of his farm operation and hurdles they overcame.

tendees. Tom Cunningham enlightened elected officials about some of the challenges he has faced in starting a new agricultural operation.

At Clark's Elioak Farm, owners Martha Clark and Nora Crist shared some of their history, and the transitions the farm has seen over the years. They informed tour participants that during the fall harvest season they welcome about 15,000 students to their farm! This emphasizes the importance of the agritourism industry, and provides a wonderful opportunity to educate the next generation about agriculture and conservation.



Nora Crist (left) and Martha A. Clark (center) share the story of their family farm, and discuss the impact weather has on agritourism.



Council Member Deb Jung, District 4, rides a horse at Merry Acres Farm.

Our last visit on the tour was Merry Acres Farm owned by Howie Feaga and his wife Chris. Merry Acres, once a dairy farm, is now an equestrian operation. They have numerous best management practices on their land.

While attendees didn't have an opportunity to see many of the best management practices due to the weather, they did get an opportunity to ride a horse in the indoor arena.

## Happy Anniversary to Farm Academy

In its 5<sup>th</sup> year, the 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 head. 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 vegetables. They sell straight



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

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.

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



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

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.

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