

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

CONSERVATION MATTERS



MARCH 2024

CALENDAR

HSCD Office Closures:

March 29: Good Friday
May 27: Memorial Day
June 19: Juneteenth
July 4: Independence Day

Cover Crop Dates:

March 1: First day to terminate cover crop
May 1: Acres receiving delayed termination incentive can be terminated
June 3: Deadline to certify termination of cover crop
March 19: National Ag Day
March 19: Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting
April 13: Howard County GreenFest
April 17: Howard County Envirothon
April 22: Earth Day

HSCD Board Meetings: 4th Thursday at 8 AM (Call 410.313.0680 for more details)

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Howard County 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. 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. Elected officials that attend the event are often amazed by the complexity and diversity of the agricultural operations in Howard County. They also get a chance to see many conservation practices that farmers implement to protect local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

This year's Farm and Conservation Tour took place October 19th, and started at Lakeview Farm in the western part of the



Tour participants learn about the conservation and management benefits of a roofed heavy use area (HUA) for cattle.

county, near Mt Airy. Lakeview Farm is owned and operated by brothers Jeff and Eddie Harrison, and is a traditional agricultural operation focusing on beef production. The Harrisons also farm in neighboring Carroll County, and grow a variety of grain crops including corn, soybeans, wheat, and other small grains. At this farm visit

our elected officials got to see a state of the art roofed heavy use area and manure storage facility, sometimes also referred to as a "cow palace". This structure provides winter cover, feeding area, and manure storage for their cow/calf herd. Allowing the Harrisons to keep the cows off their pasture during the winter season, when pastures are dormant and susceptible to damage from overuse and adverse weather. Elected officials were shocked by the costs associated with building the facility and surprised by the amount of financial assistance available to help the farmers with this important conservation effort.

The next stop on the tour was Rural Rhythm Farm in Dayton, which is owned and operated by Ricky and Leslie Bauer. Leslie is also president of the Howard County Farm Bureau, and participated in all the stops on the Farm Tour. The Bauers operate a traditional agriculture operation, growing grain and raising cows and pigs. But they have also developed a couple of unique aspects of their farm that were of interest to the tour participants. Several years ago, Ricky started growing rye for the production of whiskey in cooperation with Sagamore Spirit Distillery, the Baltimore distillery founded by Kevin Plank, of Under Armour fame.

The local rye raised on the Bauer's



Ricky Bauer discusses his rye production, which he does in cooperation with Sagamore Spirit Distillery to make Maryland whiskey.

cont'd on pg 2

Howard County Fall Farm and Conservation Tour (continued from page 1)

farm and other Maryland operations has created a distinctive flavor for the award winning whiskey. One of the other innovative growing techniques the Bauers use is the planting of forage soybeans along the outer perimeter of their soybean fields. These forage beans are hardier and can sustain browsing better than the traditional soybeans. So the deer spend more time browsing these sacrifice areas of beans and less time destroying the target crop. The Bauers have seen considerable yield increases in their soybeans by planting these forage beans around the edges of fields. It was important for the elected officials to hear the measures that farmers have to take to try to protect their crops from deer.

For lunch the group was hosted at Singh Sugar Maple Farm in Marriottsville, a diversified vegetable farm operation providing a variety of fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables, as well as a number of pick your own activities. Owner Harry Singh discussed how the operation got started during the pandemic, and has continued to focus on providing locally grown produce to the community ever since. The property had not been farmed for many years before Mr. Singh purchased it, and much of the land had become fallow. It took considerable resources to create the infrastructure and improve the soils to return the property to a productive farming operation. Mr. Singh worked with the Howard Soil Conservation District to help establish an agricultural well, which was critical to his vegetable growing operation. His focus now is on providing locally grown food and creating opportunities for families to have a fun experience on the farm. Mr. Singh also



Harry Singh provides a wagon ride around his farm and discusses his vegetable operation.

operates a farm market at a nearby location where he sells his fruits and vegetables. The visit concluded with elected officials enjoying a hay wagon ride around the farm to see some of the conservation practices installed on the property to protect soil and water resources. Participants were also able to pick out a pumpkin from the pumpkin patch to take home.

The final stop of the day was to Clover Luck Farm, an equestrian training facility in Ellicott City. The

owners of Clover Luck Farm, Stephanie Williams and Matthew Carroll, guided participants on a tour of the facilities, grounds, and conservation practices.

Clover Luck moved to this location in 2022, so they are still working on many aspects of the operation, and have enlisted Howard SCD to assist them with a variety of practices. One of the goals for the 33 acres is to establish a rotational grazing operation that will protect pastures and provide the horses with ample opportunity to exercise. One of the premier components of the new operation is a large indoor riding facility.

Several of the tour participants got a chance to ride some of the farms wonderful horses around the indoor arena. Stephanie and Matthew also shared with elected officials some of the challenges they faced and the costs associated with initiating a new equestrian facility. They highlighted some of the critical funding they received from the Howard SCD and through grants offered by Howard County Economic Development Authority, which helped them to improve their operation and address conservation challenges.

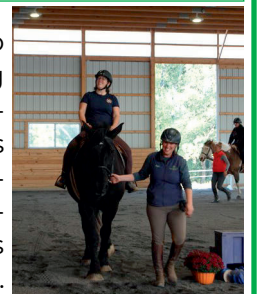
It was clear that our Howard County elected officials care about the agricultural community and are interested in learning about the challenges that farmers face. Four out of the five Councilmembers attended the Fall Farm and Conservation Tour. Also in attendance were members and staff of the Howard County Delegation to the General Assembly.

The Fall Farm and Conservation Tour was a great opportunity to connect elected officials with their local farmers and to help our representatives understand how the policies they legislate can have a profound impact on family farms. 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.



Above: Stephanie Williams and Matthew Carroll introduce tour participants to their equine operation, Clover Luck Stables.

Below: Councilmember Christiana Rigby takes a stroll around the indoor arena at Clover Luck Stables.



HOWARD SCD 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Cooperator of the Year

The Marriner Family, of Manor Hill Brewery, was Howard SCD's 2023 Cooperator of the Year.

The family's 54-acre farm is home to 14 acres of non-GMO corn, 20 egg-laying chickens, honeybee hives, 2 pygmy goats, and more than 20 Angus cattle. Their garden produces fruits, vegetables, and herbs that are sold (along with their beef) at their on-site farm stand. They also incorporate some of the fresh produce and herbs into their beers. In 2023 they installed 1460 ft of stream fencing, an ag well and 2 watering troughs for their cattle. They also completed a stream restoration project with a private environmental contractor for mitigation purposes.

Brewery operations began in June of 2015, making them the County's first farm brewery. Today, they are Maryland's largest farm brewery by production. They believe strongly in supporting local and practicing sustainability and work to achieve these values as often as possible. It should be no surprise that their motto is "Take care of the land, and the land will take care of you."



The Marriner family (l-r: daughter Rachael Mull, wife Mary, and husband Randy) receive the Governor's Citation from MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks.

Year at a Glance

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQPs) - Developed/updated 21 SCWQPs to help farmers protect natural resources on 1807.8 acres. Currently, there are 19,728.4 planned acres in the county.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Worked with 22 farmers to install 53 BMPs to protect natural resources on farmland.

Cover Crops - Provided assistance to 12 farmers. 3706 acres of cover crops were planted in Howard County.

Erosion and Sediment Control - Reviewed 690 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects, protecting 1339 acres of land.

Education and Outreach - Mid-Winter Ag Meeting for farmers; supported HCPSS initiatives; Howard County Fall Farm and Conservation Tour for Elected Officials were among the many outreach events in 2023.



Left: The Marriner family also hosted the HSCD Cooperators Dinner attended by County Executive Calvin Ball.



Right: Ground aerial planting of cover crop into a field of standing short-season soybeans. This allows the cover crop to be planted early enough to get established since the short-season beans generally come off later in the season.

Cover Crops

This year, farmers planted 3706 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.

Of those acres planted through MDA's cost-share program about 1/3 were planted to a multi-species mix. These plantings hold nutrients and soil in place over winter, and the diversity plays an important role in soil health.



Left: 4-weeks after a ground aerial seeding, wheat and crimson clover can be seen under the canopy of soybeans yet to be harvested.

HOWARD SCD 2023 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:

<u>Conservation Practice</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Access Road	165.0 ft
Critical Area Planting	2.6 ac
Stream Fencing and Other	1631 ft
Grassed Waterway	0.9 ac
Heavy Use Area Protection	0.3 ac
High Tunnel	6502 sqft
Lined Waterway or Outlet	132 ft
Pasture and Hay Planting	33.1 ac
Pipeline: Livestock	1364 ft
Prescribed Grazing	2.5 ac
Roof Runoff Structure	1 ea
Roofs and Covers	1 ea
Sediment Control Pond	3 ea
Underground Outlet	580 ft
Waste Storage Facility	1 ea
Watering Facility	6 ea
Water Well	1 ea

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

<u>Conservation Practice</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Addition of Fruit-Producing Trees and Shrubs to Existing Plantings	0.1 ac
Establish Pollinator or Beneficial Insect Habitat	1.2 ac
Leave Standing Grain Crops Unharvested to Benefit Wildlife	410.5 ac
Harvesting to Allow Desired Species to Flush or Escape	1230.3 ac
Plant Communities Consistent With the Ecological Site	0.3 ac
Utilization of Precision Pesticide Application Techniques	1428.3 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)	\$47,654
MDA Cover Crop Program	\$259,420
Federal Funding (other than CREP)	\$305,419
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	\$52,979
Patuxent Cost-Share	\$3,227
County Ag Pres (new in 2023)	\$100,112
Total 2023 Funding for Howard County Farmers	\$768,811

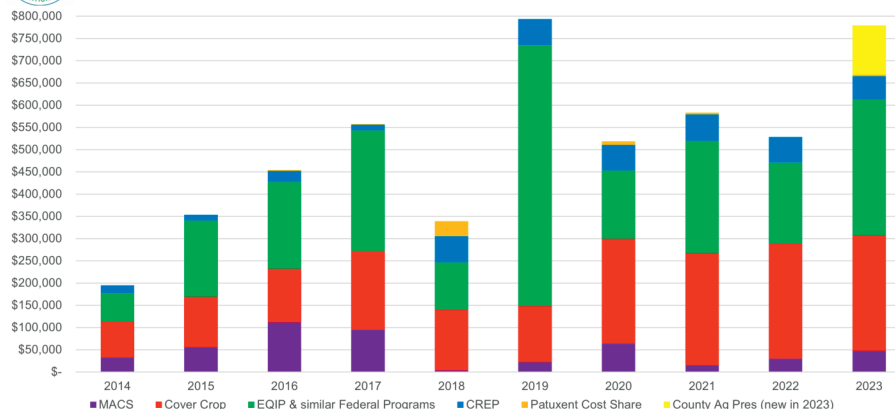


A watering trough provides a clean alternate drinking water source for livestock while protecting streams and streambanks.



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 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Education Outreach

Howard SCD had the opportunity to participate in several outreach and community events including: Howard County Elementary School STEM events, HCPSS's Our Environment in Our Hands, Envirothon (at county and state levels), Farmer Brown's Summer Camp, Howard County Community College Sustainability Event, 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.

Erosion and Sediment Control

690 erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, protecting 1,339 acres of land.



Above: Just part of our set-up at Howard County Fair. This table contains a variety of soil information from general soil basics, such as textures and soil formation, to soil health and even includes giveaways.

Recognizing the Efforts of One of Our Own

JG Warfield, HSCD Supervisor, was awarded Outstanding Contribution by a New Supervisor by MASCD at the Annual Summer Meeting in Cambridge, Maryland.

J.G. Warfield is the embodiment of conservation. He was born and raised, and still resides, on a farm here in Howard County. Prior to working within the Soil Conservation Partnership, Mr. Warfield not only worked with the District to implement conservation practices on his family's farm, he also served as a District Board Supervisor from 1975 to 1989. One might say that his experience inspired his career, and then his career continued to feed his service to the community and conserving natural resources.

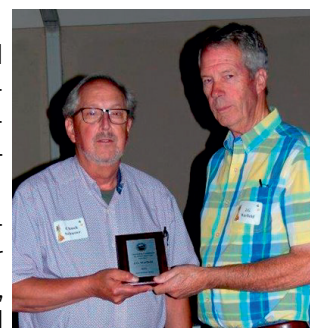
J.G. began his official paid conservation career as a Soil Conservationist with USDA Soil Conservation Service, now Natural Resources Conservation Service, right here in Howard County. After years of applying his farming and conservation knowledge creating conservation plans for his fellow farmers, J.G. moved up the ranks to District Conservationist in Montgomery County, eventually covering Howard and Montgomery Counties before retiring. Since retiring, J.G. joined the Howard Soil Conservation District's Board of Supervisors as an Associate Supervisor, then taking on the role of Supervisor when the opportunity allowed.

During his time since taking on the role of Supervisor in this new phase of his life, J.G. has continued to share his invaluable knowledge and experience with the District, benefitting farmers and natural resources. Whether it is a decision to be made concerning our annual Mid-Winter Ag Meeting, conservation and resource concerns, or meetings with elected officials, J.G. is always willing to share, discuss and educate others.

With his vast conservation experience, J.G. is an incredible asset to the Board and the staff. He is always willing to provide his input on challenging conservation projects and to serve the broader agricultural community. Most recently, J.G. served on a special County Committee to evaluate the payment structure for the County Ag Preservation Program.

Since coming back on to the Board of Supervisors, J.G. has also been very active in our outreach efforts. He has faithfully participated in our Farm Tours for elected officials. He has also engaged with legislators at a variety of events, including individual meetings with County Council members and virtual meetings with members of the Howard Delegation to the General Assembly.

Not only is J.G. Warfield an outstanding New Supervisor, he is also interwoven in the fiber that is Howard County agriculture and Howard Soil Conservation District.



Above: Chuck Schuster presents J.G. Warfield, longtime colleague and friend, with the award.



Henry Berghoff, HSCD's newest Engineering Specialist/Conservation Planner.

Introducing the District's Newest Addition

Henry Berghoff recently started as the new HSCD Engineering Specialist/Conservation Planner. Henry earned his Bachelor's degree in environmental science from Bowdoin College in Maine, and his Master of Science degree from Duke in North Carolina, also in environmental science. Henry began his career in conservation as a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin, West Africa, where he worked with local farmers to implement Best Management Practices on their corn, soybean, rice, yam, and cashew farms, among other initiatives. In Idaho, Henry grew hundreds of thousands each of pine, spruce, larch, fir, and cedar tree seedlings to repopulate burned areas on public lands for the US Forest Service. Most recently, Henry worked with the NRCS in Minnesota as an Engineering Technician designing on farm solutions to improve soil health, increase farm profitability, and reduce downstream water quality impacts. Henry looks forward to meeting Howard County farmers!

Cover Crop Program

Reminders concerning spring certification for the 2023-24 MDA Cover Crop Program:

Termination may begin **March 1, 2024**. For those who requested the delayed termination incentive, and for those who did late planting, these acres cannot be terminated prior to **May 1, 2024**.

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, 2024**, you must certify to the SCD that the cover crop has been destroyed.

If you are interested in participating in the 2024-25 MDA Cover Crop Program look for information in late spring. If you would like to be added to the HSCD's cover crop contact list please 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.>

Economic Development Authority's Agricultural Grant for Innovation and Expansion

Howard County Agricultural Grant for Innovation and Expansion (AGIE) is designed to help Howard County's agricultural producers expand or diversify their business operations. Eligible applicants must be a crop or livestock producer or processor, agricultural cooperative, seafood processor, or primary or secondary timber products processor.

Applicants can receive grants from \$1,000.00 up to \$20,000.00 for research and development, production buildings, major fixtures, processing facilities, etc. There is one annual grant cycle each year. Grant applications will be accepted throughout the year (August – June) subject to funding availability and due by the posted June deadline.

Completed applications are due no later than June 15, and are to be emailed to kljohnson@hceda.org.

Applications can be found at <https://hceda.org/wp-content/uploads/Ag-Grant-Application-6-21-1.pdf>

SPOTTED LANTERNFLY EGG MASSES





Emilie Swachhammer, Penn State Extension Massachusetts Dept. of Agriculture Emilie Swachhammer, Penn State Extension

SCRAPE, SMASH, REPORT!

www.mda.maryland.gov/spottedlanternfly

Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting

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 19th, 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM, at the Howard County Fairgrounds Dining Hall. Registration and a light meal will be at 6:00 PM, with the meeting beginning at 6:30 PM. Topics include 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. *Attendees are eligible to receive two (2) Nutrient Management CEUs.*

There is no cost to attend but pre-registration is requested, by Friday, 3/15/24. To pre-register, please call the Howard SCD, 410.313.0680, or email kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov

What is CSP?

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. CSP is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship.

What are the benefits?

CSP may provide many benefits, including increased crop productivity, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

For example, CSP can help you:

- Schedule timely planting and management of cover crops
- Develop a grazing plan that will improve your forage base
- Implement no-till to reduce erosion or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat

If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.

NRCS Programs & the IRA

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with \$19.5 billion in additional funds over five years for its existing conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

The IRA directs NRCS to use these additional funds specifically for climate change mitigation, activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve carbon storage, like:

- Cover Crops
- Reduced-Till and No-Till
- Nutrient Management
- Prescribed Grazing
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Wetland Restoration

Through this funding, NRCS is seeking to both benefit the climate, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and the producer, by improving access to programs and providing financial and technical assistance to improve their farm, ranch, urban operation or forest land.

EQIP and CSP: NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but if you're interested in EQIP or CSP, you should apply by your state's ranking dates to be considered for funding in the current cycle.

If interested, please contact your local NRCS office / SCD partnership (Howard County: 410.313.0680). It is never too early to plan for future conservation projects.

“Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man” - George Washington (Mount Vernon, 1797)

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