

# Conservation Matters



JUNE 2019

Howard Soil  
Conservation District  
14735 Frederick Road  
Cooksville, MD 21723  
410.313.0680  
[www.howardscd.org](http://www.howardscd.org)

## CALENDAR

**June 19-20: Maryland Envirothon at St. Mary's College of Maryland**

**June 21 - July 17: MDA Cover Crop Program Sign-Up**

**July 4: Independence Day (Office Closed)**

**August 3-10: Howard County Fair**

**August 5-7: Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts Annual Meeting at Turf Valley**

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

**September 2: Labor Day (Office Closed)**

**September: Howard SCD Cooperators Dinner**

## MDA's 2019-20 Cover Crop Program

Cover crops are widely recognized as one of the most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable ways for farmers to meet nutrient and sediment reduction targets outlined in Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.



In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established nutrient and sediment limits for the Chesapeake Bay known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Maryland and the other Bay jurisdictions are working to meet these pollution thresholds by implementing their Watershed Implementation Plans.

Cover crops are one of the most cost effective practices to help the State reach its Chesapeake Bay clean up goals. They recycle nitrogen, reduce erosion, add valuable organic matter to the soil and help protect fields from too much or too little rain. The Maryland Department of Agriculture's Cover Crop Program provides grants to farmers who plant small grains such as wheat, rye or barley, or brassicas (plants in the cabbage family) on their fields following the fall harvest. These grants help offset seed, labor and equipment costs associated with planting cover crops. In 2015, cover crop mixes containing legumes were introduced to help create diversity and give farmers more planting options. As they grow, cover

crops protect water quality by recycling unused plant nutrients remaining in the soil from the preceding summer crop. Once established, cold-hardy cover crops work all winter to shield fields against erosion caused by wind, rain, snow and ice.

Farmers may sign-up for the 2019-2020 Cover Crop Program June 21 through July 17 at the Howard Soil Conservation District office.

Two big changes to the cover crop program this year include the addition of two incentive payment opportunities.

- Acres planted by aerial seeding, using an airplane or helicopter, by September 1<sup>st</sup> are eligible for an incentive payment of \$10/acre.
- Acres planted in accordance with Cover Crop Program rules, with a delayed kill-down, after May 1<sup>st</sup>, are eligible for an incentive payment of \$15/acre.

To find out more about MDA's Cover Crop Program or to schedule a time to come in to the Howard SCD office to sign-up please call 410.313.0680.



## Envirothon

Envirothon is a hands-on, environmental resource based competition for high school students. Resource areas include aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and a current environmental issue. Students train throughout the school year, at field training days or in the school. Teams compete at their local Envirothon in the spring with the winning team from each County advancing to the Maryland Envirothon, held in June. From there the winning team advances to the NCF Envirothon where they have an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills against the top teams from across the country and Canada. Along the way there are many learning opportunities, real world experiences – and of course prizes.



Students measuring the diameter at breast height (DBH) of a tree.

### *Envirothon In Your Backyard*

This past fall a training day was held at the Howard County Conservancy Mount Pleasant Farm, but training op-

portunities don't stop there. Howard SCD has training kits, containing tools, field guides and additional resources, for teams to



Determining horizons in the soils pit.

borrow to support further learning and the strengthening of their skills. Additional training opportunities are available to teams as requested. Members of the winning team at our Howard County Envirothon receive a scholarship prize.

### *2019 Howard County Envirothon*

Four teams from two schools, Mount Hebron High School and Wilde Lake High School, trained throughout the school year and participated in the Howard County Envirothon competition. There was beautiful weather, but

**Congratulations to the winning team from Mount Hebron High School! Best of luck at the Maryland Envirothon!**

that was just an added bonus to the excitement, and seeing culmination of the students' hard work.

To learn more about Envirothon visit [www.envirothon.org](http://www.envirothon.org) or [www.mdenvirothon.org](http://www.mdenvirothon.org). You may also contact Kristal McCormick, Howard County Envirothon Coordinator, [kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov) or 410.313.0680.

## Howard SCD would like to THANK our 2019 Howard County Envirothon Sponsors

Air View Farm  
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Chapel View Farm  
Circle D Farm  
Gutschick, Little & Weber, PA  
Howard County Conservancy  
Howard County Farm Bureau  
Larriland Farm  
MidAtlantic Farm Credit  
J. David Mullinix & Sons  
Sun Nurseries  
Walnut Springs Nursery, Inc

## The Howard Soil Conservation District Welcomes a New NRCS Soil Conservation Technician: Marcus Williams

Marcus was born in Hopewell, Virginia. When he was young Marcus was involved with 4-H, and then was a member of FFA in his teenage years. At 18 years old, he got a scholarship from Virginia State University. While pursuing his bachelor's degree in Plant and Soil Science with a concentration in Horticulture and Environmental Science, he also played with the Virginia State University football team 'The Trojans' for three years as an Offensive Lineman. In the meantime, as an undergraduate he became part of the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) club. After graduating from

Virginia State University, he then pursued a master's degree in Food Safety and Biosecurity at Virginia Tech. He participated in AmeriCorps as a Park Ranger for a year in Knoxville, Tennessee. Marcus then worked as a Virginia Extension agent for 8 years and created a program to address the challenges associated with food deserts which allows people with limited access to get produce/food. The program is called the Mobile Market Farmer program. As a father of two, a 6 year old and 4 month old, he would like to pass on to them the interest and caring of natural resources and agriculture. As a hobby, Marcus likes to play video

games and kickball. One of his long-term goals is to be with NRCS for the foreseeable future. After all, "You are only limited by your imagination".



Marcus teaching 4th graders about soils during Our Environment in Our Hands.

## Tax Credit for Land in Agricultural Land Preservation

A Howard County property tax credit is available to landowners who own property enrolled in an agricultural 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. 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 easement holders are not aware that they must reapply for the tax credit annually.

This property tax credit has gotten attention lately because some easement holders assumed that the credit was applied to the tax bill on an annual basis. But thanks to the Farm Bureau and some investigating by Councilman David Yungmann from District 5, it has become evident that a property owner

with an agricultural preservation easement must apply annually for this tax credit. On behalf of the agricultural community Councilman Yungmann met with the Director of Finance and the Office of Law to request that this property tax credit be automatically applied to ag preservation easement parcels on an annual basis, without the requirement to reapply. However, due to language in the annotated Code of Maryland and internal County policies, a consensus could not be reached regarding automatically crediting ag preservation easement holders.

If you own land in either a state or county 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](mailto:jlevy@howardcountymd.gov)) or the Assistant Director of Finance, Dejuan Felder, 410.313.1180 ([dfelder@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:dfelder@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)! Also, if you have not specifically applied for the tax credit in previous years there may be an opportunity to seek a property tax credit retroactively. Several farmers have taken advantage of this and received compensation for a year or more worth of lost property tax credit. Again, investigate this as soon as possible, because once the new tax assessment cycle occurs there may be limitations on how far back the credit can be given.

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](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Finance/Billing-and-Payments/Real-Property-Taxes/Tax-Credits). If you have dedicated your property to agricultural preservation you deserve every tax credit you can get, so go get your money!

## Tax Break for Conservation Equipment

The Maryland Income Tax Subtraction Modification for Conservation Equipment helps farmers offset costs associated with buying certain types of conservation equipment to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect water quality in streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. The subtraction modification allows farmers to subtract eligible equipment purchases from taxable income on Maryland individual and corporate tax returns.

A farmer is allowed a subtraction on his/her Maryland Tax Return equal to 100 percent of the cost of buying and installing conservation tillage equipment, liquid manure injection equipment, poultry or livestock manure spreading equipment, global positioning devices, and integrated optical sensing and nutrient application systems. Ver-

tical tillage equipment used to incorporate livestock manure or poultry litter is eligible for a subtraction credit of 50 percent of its cost. The following rules apply:

- The equipment must have a useful life of four years.
- The taxpayer must own the equipment at least 3 years after the taxable year in which the subtraction is made.
- If the subtraction exceeds the Maryland taxable income, any excess may be used in succeeding tax years, not to exceed five.
- A taxpayer must submit a form and signed and dated receipt of the equipment purchase to the local soil conservation district and

the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Information on this program can be found on the MDA website at: [mda.maryland.gov/resource\\_conservation/Documents/taxsubtraction.pdf](http://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Documents/taxsubtraction.pdf)



No-till drills qualify for the Tax Subtraction Program.



## What is a Soil Conservation District

Soil Conservation Districts are in every county in Maryland and in nearly every county and city across the nation. Our origins date back to the Dust Bowl Years of the 1930s when Congress - in response to the widespread damage caused by the loss of our nation's top soil - passed the Soil Conservation Act. This Act created for the first time a national program to control and prevent soil erosion and led to the birth of soil conservation districts - independent units of state government responsible for carrying out natural resource protection programs at the local level.

Today there are more than 3,000 soil conservation districts in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. District responsibilities have evolved over the last half century as our land use patterns have changed and the importance of addressing the environmental impacts of development activities and nutrient pollution in our waterways has come to light. We work with farmers, landowners, developers and county governments to place conservation practices where they are needed most - on the farm fields, pastures and construction sites that can impact Maryland's streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

### What We Do

We perform a range of conservation activities aimed at keeping the soil productive and our waterways clean and healthy. We work with landowners to enhance farming operations, prevent flooding, safeguard streams and reservoirs, foster wildlife habitat, manage forest resources and address natural resource impacts from urban growth. Helping farmers install best management practices on their farms to protect soil and water resources and comply with environmental laws is a top priority. Districts also work with small horse farms and other livestock operations to help them manage manure

more efficiently and improve pasture health. In addition, districts provide landowners and developers with information on soils and other natural resources, while assisting local governments with stormwater management and sediment and erosion control plans required by Maryland law.

The Howard Soil Conservation District is also involved with a number of outreach and education efforts. We frequently coordinate presentations, workshops, and other events to educate landowners, students, and the general public about conservation projects, programs, and initiatives. Helping people to understand the benefits of soil and water conservation will improve local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

### How We Work for You

Each soil conservation district functions independently under a local five-member Board of Supervisors. This ensures that local natural resource issues are addressed. Although soil conservation districts typically occupy the same boundaries as counties, we are not part of county government. Our staff and operating budgets are funded through a combination of federal, state and local assistance.

To carry out our mission, soil conservation districts work with a number of local, state and federal agencies including county government offices, the Maryland Departments of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, the University of Maryland Extension, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corps of Engineers and state and federal legislators.

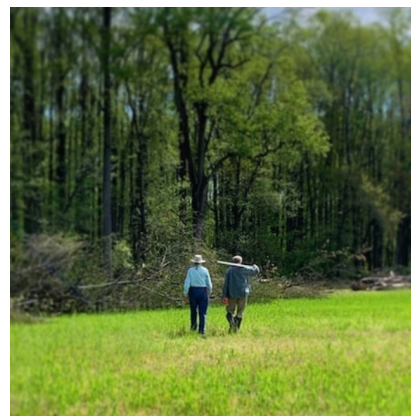
### Become a Partner in Conservation

Your soil conservation district is hard at work protecting natural resources and the quality of life for you and your

family. But we can do an even better job with your help. If you are a farmer, become a cooperator with your local soil conservation district. Remember, we are not a regulatory agency. Districts work voluntarily with farmers to enhance farming operations and protect natural resources. We specialize in helping farmers secure financial assistance to install agricultural best management practices that control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect water quality.

If you live on a smaller parcel of land, you can practice conservation by requesting a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan, becoming an Earth Team volunteer, signing up for local environmental cleanup activities and educating yourself on sound conservation practices for home, lawn and garden projects. Call your local soil conservation district today to become a partner in conservation.

The previous information can be found in the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation District's "What is a Soil Conservation District" brochure. The excerpt has been modified to meet the needs of Howard Soil Conservation District.



Wes Earp, HSCD Technician, and Lynn Moore, farmer, meet to discuss conservation practices.

## Celebrating 75 Years of Conservation

The Howard Soil Conservation District was founded on May 10, 1945 by 5 farmers from the local agricultural community. These trailblazers recognized the importance of protecting our soil, water, and other natural resources, and wanted to insure that farmers throughout the County would have access to technical assistance and guidance for all of their conservation initiatives. As soil conservation districts were forming across the country during this time period, it took visionary farmers like these 5 gentlemen to come together and commit their time, energy, and talents to the greater good for the purpose of land stewardship and conserving natural resources.

As the Howard Soil Conservation District prepares to celebrate 75 years of assisting the local community with soil and water conservation, we hope that you will share with us any old photos, documents, or other memorabilia related to our history and the protection

of natural resources in Howard County. Many farm families in the county



Howard Soil Conservation District's First Board of Supervisors:

Edwin Warfield Jr	1945-1951
William R Powell	1945-1964
Roland Maxwell	1945-1948
Warren (Buddy) Myers	Extension Agent
E Walter Scott	1945-1956
James D. Brown	1945-1946
(not pictured)	

have relatives who either served on our Board of Supervisors, or had close working relationships with our field staff over the years. We would like to include as much historic information as possible in next year's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

Farming and conservation are closely linked, with farmers understanding better than most people how to work, utilize, and protect the land. Howard County farmers have always had a strong stewardship ethic, and the Howard Soil Conservation District has been proud to support the agricultural community for almost 75 years. We look forward to celebrating this conservation legacy with you, and we look forward to helping farmers to continue to protect and enhance our natural resources long into the future. Our celebration is your celebration! If you have anything to share please contact the District at 410.313.0680.

## Hugh Hammond Bennett: Father of Soil Conservation

Hugh Hammond Bennett (April 15, 1881- July 7, 1960) was born near Wadesboro in Anson County, North Carolina, the son of William Osborne Bennett and Rosa May Hammond, farmers.

Bennett earned a bachelor of science degree with an emphasis in chemistry and geology from the University of North Carolina in June 1903. At that time, the Bureau of Soils within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had just begun to make county-based soil surveys, which would be regarded as important American contributions to soil science. Bennett accepted a job in the bureau headquarters' laboratory in Washington, D.C., but agreed first to assist on the soil survey of Davidson County, Tennessee, beginning July 1903. The acceptance of that task, in Bennett's words, "fixed my life's work in soils."

The outdoor work suited Bennett, and he compiled a number of soil surveys. The 1905 survey of Louisa County, Virginia, in particular, profoundly affected Bennett. He had been directed to the county to investigate its reputation of declining crop yields. As he compared virgin, timbered sites to eroded fields, he became convinced that soil erosion was a problem not just for the individual farmer but also for rural economies. While this experience aroused his curiosity, it was, according to Bennett's recollection, Thomas C. Chamberlain's paper on "Soil Wastage" presented in 1908 at the Governors Conference in the White House (published in *Conference of Governors on Conservation of Natural Resources*, ed. W.J. McGee [1909]) that "fixed my determination to pursue that subject to some possible point of counteraction."

In addition to supervising the soil surveys in the southern United States, a position he assumed at the bureau in 1909,



Hugh Hammond Bennett

Bennett accepted opportunities to study soils abroad and in U.S. territories. He worked in Costa Rica and Panama (1909), Alaska (1914), and Cuba (1925-1926) and served on the Guatemala-Honduras Boundary Commission (1919).

Bennett wrote steadily and increasingly about soil erosion in the 1920's in an

Article continued on page 6 ...

... Hugh Hammond Bennett article continued from page 5.

array of journals from popular ones such as *North American Review* and *Country Gentleman* to scientific ones such as *Scientific Monthly* and the *Journal of Agricultural Research*. Eventually he succeeded in arousing national attention where others had failed. Among his writings of the 1920's, probably none was more influential than a USDA bulletin coauthored with William Ridgely Chapline titled *Soil Erosion: A National Menace* (1928). In it Bennett expressed the motivation for his later actions: "The writer, after 24 years spent in studying the soils of the United States, is of the opinion that soil erosion is the biggest problem confronting the farmers of the Nation over a tremendous part of its agricultural lands." The bulletin was not a manual on the methods of preventing soil erosion; rather it was intended to draw attention "to the evils of this process of land wastage and to the need for increased practical information and research work relating to the problem."

In answer to the need for action on soil conservation, Bennett promoted research with immediate applicability to conservation problems on the farm. Largely in response to Bennett's campaign for soil conservation, Representative James P. Buchanan of Texas attached an amendment to the 1930 appropriations bill authorizing the USDA to establish a series of soil erosion experiment stations. Bennett selected the sites for some stations and designed their research programs.

The availability of New Deal funds for emergency work programs meant that some of the funds could be directed to soil conservation. Bennett successfully argued that single practices such as the terracing of land would not succeed and that a comprehensive program to address numerous conservation problems on farmlands was needed. Having made himself the recognized expert on soil erosion, he became the director of the Soil Erosion Service in the Department of the Interior in September

1933. The agency worked with farmers to demonstrate soil conservation methods in watershed-based demonstrations. Wanting the work to have a firmer legislative foundation, Bennett successfully promoted the passage of the Soil Conservation Act of April 27 1935, which created a Soil Conservation Service at the USDA. Bennett served as its first chief until his retirement in 1951. The agency's work and staff spread nationwide in cooperating with nearly 3,000 locally organized conservation districts. The Brown Creek Soil Conservation District covering parts of Anson and Union counties in North Carolina was the first district recognized, on August 4, 1937. The first Soil Conservation District formed in Maryland was in Kent County, and was established May 11, 1938.

This excerpt is from <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/about/history/?cid=stelpdb1044395>

## New Life for Old Structures

If you have ever looked at an old barn, building, or dilapidated house and thought about the history of the structure or the stories it could tell, then you might appreciate the work being done by a Baltimore company called Brick and Board. Located in the heart of the city, Brick and Board got its start through the demolition and reconstruction process surrounding old row homes. Brick and Board is a social enterprise of Humanim, a 501(c)(3) based in Baltimore that focuses on "harnessing the deconstruction and salvage industries towards creating jobs for folks with barriers to employment". Part of their mission is to employ local residents in the restoration projects in their neighborhoods, and teach them the skillsets required to restore and repurpose these materials from old, often abandoned structures into unique and viable products. By developing skilled laborers and keeping useful material out of landfills this en-

terprise is breaking new ground in the way we approach renovation and restoration of neighborhoods.

As the company has grown and expanded their efforts they have realized that opportunities exist far outside the city limits for reclaiming old building materials. Deconstruction projects have now expanded to include sites up and down the East Coast from Florida to New England. The company has also realized that barns and agricultural buildings often offer unique architecture and building materials not often found in more urban settings. In many cases, Brick and Board will pay for materials from these old structures. In other cases they assist with the demolition through a barter system where they remove any useful materials and provide labor and equipment for the removal of the building. Some owners of old structures get a sense of satisfaction and pride in knowing that a

piece of history from their farm can be repurposed and used instead of just burned or landfilled. Brick and Board Director Max Pollock is always willing to take a look at potential structures and evaluate the potential for salvaging materials from them.

The model created by Brick and Board and their sister outfit, Details Deconstruction, is one that is gaining popularity throughout urban areas across the country. Cities like Portland, Milwaukee, St. Louis and others have either started similar programs or are exploring the possibility.





## USDA Reopens Continuous CRP Signup

*Extensions also available to Many Expiring Contracts*

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications beginning June 3, 2019, for certain practices under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup and will offer extensions for expiring CRP contracts. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized CRP, one of the country's largest conservation programs.

"USDA offers a variety of conservation programs to farmers and ranchers, and the Conservation Reserve Program is an important tool for private lands management," said FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce. "CRP allows agricultural producers to set aside land to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and boost soil health."

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the continuous CRP signup when 2014 Farm Bill authority expired. Since passage of the 2018 Farm Bill last December, Fordyce said FSA has carefully analyzed the language and determined that a limited signup prioritizing water-quality practices furthers conservation goals and makes sense for producers as FSA works to fully implement the program.

### Continuous CRP Signup

This year's signup will include such practices as grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. View a full list of practices ap-

proved for this program at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/crp-continuous-enrollment/index>

Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration. Soil rental rates will be set at 90 percent of the existing rates. Incentive payments will not be offered for these contracts.

### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Signup

FSA will also reopen signup for existing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreements. The fact sheet on the Maryland Chesapeake Bay CREP agreement is available here: [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2018/crep\\_maryland\\_factsheet\\_apr2018.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2018/crep_maryland_factsheet_apr2018.pdf)

### Other CRP Signup Options

Fordyce said FSA plans to open a CRP general signup in December 2019 and a CRP Grasslands signup later.

### CRP Contract Extensions

A one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants who have expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter describing their options.

Alternatively, producers with expiring

contracts may have the option to enroll in the Transition Incentives Program, which provides two additional annual rental payments on the condition the land is sold or rented to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group.

### More Information

On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed into law the 2018 Farm Bill, which provides support, certainty and stability to our nation's farmers, ranchers and land stewards by enhancing farm support programs, improving crop insurance, maintaining disaster programs and promoting and supporting voluntary conservation. FSA is committed to implementing these changes as quickly and effectively as possible, and today's updates are part of meeting that goal.

Producers interested in applying for continuous CRP practices, including those under existing CREP agreements, or who need an extension, should contact their USDA service center beginning June 3. To locate your local FSA office, visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov). More information on CRP can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).

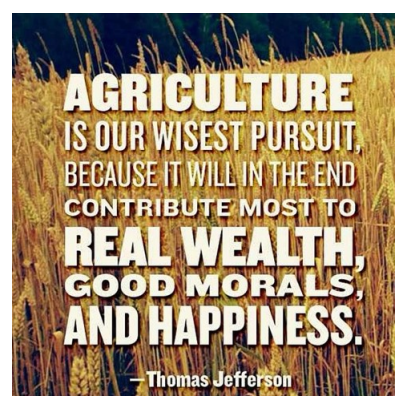
This information is from an USDA NRCS Press Release

## Mental Health Awareness

In March, Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) held four Mental Health Workshops across the state. The purpose of the workshops was to educate those individuals working with farmers on a daily basis to detect early warning signs of, and the prevention methods for, severe mental stress and substance abuse. Howard Soil Conservation District was fortunate to have four staff mem-

bers attend this training in an effort to better support our community.

Please save the following information in your phone, as you never know when it may be needed or who might need it ... Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1 . 8 0 0 . 2 7 3 . 8 2 5 5 o r [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



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DISTRICT**

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