

Conservation Matters



DECEMBER 2018

Howard Soil
Conservation District
14735 Frederick Road
Cooksville, MD 21723
410-313-0680
www.howardscd.org

CALENDAR

December 18: Ag Breakfast for Elected Officials

December 25: HSCD Office Closed

January 1: HSCD Office Closed

January 16: Transferring the Farm to the Next Generation

February/March: Mid-Winter Ag Meeting (Date TBA)

February 28: Nutrient Management Annual Implementation Reports Due

March 27: Howard County Envirothon Spring Training Day

April 30: Howard County Envirothon

Cooperator Spotlight: Abby Gibbon

Abby Gibbon is a Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) event rider, United States Dressage Federation (USDF) medalist and lifelong horsewoman who grew up caring for her own backyard ponies. She was an avid Howard County Pony Clubber, graduating with her B rating, and spent several formative years on the A circuit, piloting pony and junior hunters at the Washington International, and Horse Shows in the Sun (HITS) Ocala. She's had 20+ years specializing in eventing and dressage.

Abby thought it would be a "Fine Idea" to purchase a 51-acre farm in Mount Airy in order to run her boarding and training operation. Over the last few years she has worked diligently to improve the farm and streamline daily duties and chores. She currently has 19 horses on the farm, and last winter presented a number of challenges to provide water for the horses in the turnout fields across the stream. The closest hydrant is by the barn, which would require filling drums of water and trucking it in the gator across the stream without getting stuck. Horses drink anywhere from 12-15 gallons of water per day/per horse, so she knew this wasn't an ideal situation.

Howard SCD's Kristen Parris has known Abby for years and after hearing about the difficulty she

had last winter, reached out to her, knowing the District would be able to help. Working with Abby, Kristen created a conservation plan, including a plan to implement five pressure fed watering troughs, pipeline and heavy use areas using Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection Group Cost-



Two horses at Fine Idea cannot wait for the pad to be poured to enjoy some fresh water.



Installed waterer with heavy use area pad.

Share funding. This program helped off-set the cost while addressing the resource concern of inadequate water. Running electric out to the far fields wasn't an option, so she went with the Bar Bar A Watering troughs which are self-draining. She has been very pleased with the results.

Howard County 4-H Livestock Judging

"Livestock judging consists of carefully analyzing animals and measuring them against a standard that is commonly accepted as being ideal. Livestock judging also has been defined as a study of the relationship between an animal's form and function.

There are numerous benefits to gain from competing on a livestock evaluation team. In the course of training and competition you are given the opportunity to interact with future leaders of the livestock industry. You develop a keen sense of judgment and confidence to make a decision that you defend in a set of

oral reasons. ...

Participation in livestock judging builds your character and makes you a more complete person."

(excerpt from "Livestock Judging Techniques" by Jerry Lipsey, University of Missouri Extension)

A group of nine Howard County 4-Hers traveled to Auburn, Indiana to compete in the Premier Stockman Livestock Judging Contest on October 20th. Out of thirty-seven 4-H teams, a Howard

(continued on page 2)

Ho Co 4-H Livestock Judging (continued from page 1)

County team consisting of Karson Fahey, Makenzie Hereth, Colby Hough and Kelly Spicer placed 2nd Overall! The team also finished 5th in Beef, 10th in Sheep, 2nd in Swine, and 7th in Reasons.

Karson Fahey (as individual) placed 7th in swine and 10th overall.

Kelly Spicer (as individual) placed 10th in swine and 9th overall.

Congratulations to all of the kids who participated.



Howard County 4-H Livestock Judging Team: M. Hereth, K. Fahey, K. Spicer, C. Hough

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; for 2019 it is



Student measures tree height using a clinometer.

Agriculture and Environment-Knowledge and Technology to Feed the World. 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

Estate Planning Workshops

This winter, the University of Maryland Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREC) is partnering with the Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI), the University of Maryland Extension, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and Nationwide Insurance to host a series of one-day farm succession workshops around Maryland.

The first series of workshops, *Transferring the Farm to the Next Generation*, features speakers like Farm Management Specialist Dale Johnson, Craig Highfield with Alliance for the Bay, and Extension Legal Specialist Paul Goeringer. This series will discuss business planning techniques, attached forested land, estate planning, tax basics, and more.

[Transferring the Farm to the Next Generation Workshop Series Upcoming Dates and Locations:](#)

Howard County – Wednesday, January 16, 2019, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Howard County Fairgrounds,

Dining Hall, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd, West Friendship, MD 21794

<https://extension.umd.edu/events/wed-2019-01-16-0830-transferring-farm-next-generation-central-maryland>

Baltimore County – Thursday, January 17, 2019, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Baltimore County Extension Office, 1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2015-49200-24225.

Cover Crops

The acres of cover crops planted under Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Cover Crop Program were down this year due to the excessive rainfall. The rain, and wet fields, made it difficult to harvest crops in time as well as limited ability to get in the field to plant. In Howard County there were 1500 acres reported this fall, while an average year is usually closer to 3000 acres.

ENVIROTHON DATES:

3/27: Howard County Envirothon
Spring Training Day
4/30: Howard County Envirothon
Event
6/19-20: Maryland Envirothon, St Mary's College

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.

On October 17th a training day was held at the Howard County Conservancy Mount Pleasant Farm, with eleven students attending—on their day off of school. Another training day is scheduled for March 27th, but training opportunities don't stop there.



Student measures tree diameter using a d-tape.

Howard SCD has training kits, containing tools, field guides and additional resources, for teams to 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.

To learn more about Envirothon visit www.envirothon.org or www.mdenvirothon.org. To find out how to get involved with the Howard County Envirothon contact Kristal McCormick, 410.313.0680 or kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov

Farm Academy Follow-up

On Saturday, September 29th Howard Soil Conservation District along with Howard County Economic Development Authority and Howard County Government held their eighth on-farm Farm Academy for the public. This session was held at Myrtle Woods Farm in the Lawyers Hill Historic District of Elkridge, Maryland. Myrtle Woods Farm is a multifaceted operation with hogs, chickens, produce, herbs, and edible flowers raised on its 8.8 acres. While not certified organic, organic farming practices are used in the management of the farm. The session included learning about agricultur-

al preservation in Howard County, conservation on farms, the economic aspects of farming decisions and the management of the farm. The group took a walking tour of the farm for a chance to see the operation in action as well as an opportunity to ask questions. It was a beautiful day and a learning opportunity for everyone.

To learn more about upcoming Farm Academy Sessions visit www.livegreenhoward.com/green/



(above, left, below) Farmer Cathy Hudson speaks to attendees.



Monarch Buddy Program

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Elementary Science Office is working with third grade teachers and students, to help them learn about the Monarch Butterfly and to support the Monarch's population growth. They are committed to helping increase the number of Monarch Butterflies, and have created a Monarch Buddy program. In the spring, they recruited volunteers to become Milkweed Plot Stewards and/or Monarch Buddies.

This Fall, third grade students reared Monarch caterpillars in their classrooms that were collected from Howard County milkweed plants. This should be a more natural, and ultimately more successful, way to support butterfly populations.

The HCPSS Grounds Department worked with the Elementary Science Office to identify and clear 100-square foot plots on all 42 elementary school yards. In the spring school staff and community volunteers seeded the plots with local common milkweed.

Volunteers called Milkweed Plot Stewards - who planted milkweed plugs, continued to monitor the plots through the summer, with water and weeding as needed, and reported

back to the science office (email/ notes) with their observations.

However, in order for the Monarch rearing program to begin, caterpillars had to come from already established milkweed plots in the county. Each of the 42 elementary schools needed a Monarch Buddy to collect/supply monarch butterfly caterpillars and milkweed from local plots. Monarch Buddies are individuals willing to seek out caterpillars and milkweed for them to eat either in their own yards or in designated areas in the county (which would be identified for you). Since Monarch caterpillars pupate within a few weeks, this does not involve a long-term commitment for

milkweed collection! Becoming a Monarch Buddy is easy and rewarding. Many people may know what a Monarch is, but they might not know that this program had a total of 188 Monarchs delivered to the 42 schools. Of those, 124 Monarchs reached the chrysalis stage; 87 fully grown adult Monarchs were released in this year's program.

This year Howard SCD's Michael Calkins helped the Lisbon Elementary School with the Monarchs program. Michael said "My experience was awesome and it was great to see the excitement of the kids and to see their expressions when they released the butterflies. Out of the 188 eggs/caterpillars that went to schools this year, Lisbon ES received 7. I am happy to report that of the 7, Lisbon ES released 2 butterflies. It was an educational experience for all - the teachers, students and myself, to learn about the Monarchs and how they grow. It was a great time and I hope I can help them next year." If you or anyone you know might be interested in supporting the Monarch Buddy program next year contact Amy Reese (amy_reese@hcpss.org) Coordinator, Elementary Science Programs, HCPSS.



Jennifer Corn delivers a thank you card from Lisbon Elementary School 3rd graders to Michael Calkins for his help with the Monarch Butterfly Program.

Howard Soil Conservation



The Howard Soil Conservation District held this year's Cooperators Dinner at Colmont Farm in Glenwood on September 13, 2018. Hosts Mike and Lesley Salandra welcomed over 100 visitors to their farm to celebrate the conservation efforts of County farmers. The event took place in a beautifully restored bank barn, which featured scenic views of the farm and surrounding landscapes. In addition to the wonderful setting, guests also had an opportunity to try their aim at pumpkin chunkin'.

The farm operation includes traditional grain crops of corn and soybeans as well as hay production. The Salandras also have a race horse operation on the property. With over 300 acres of fields and forests enrolled in the County's agricultural preservation program, and the headwaters of Little Cattail Creek located on the property, the farm was the perfect setting to recognize members of the agricultural community for their conservation accomplishments.

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's recipient of the Conservation Education Award was Rhonda Winkler. Ms. Winkler's outstanding efforts in promoting and guiding a variety of 4-H clubs has provided an opportunity for kids throughout the county to gain a better understanding of agriculture, animal care, and showmanship. These 4-H students also learn skills related to public speaking and teamwork. For all of her dedicated service to the Howard County 4-H Program and for assisting our future ag leaders, the Howard SCD was pleased to recognize Ms. Winkler. In addition to the award presented by Howard SCD, Ms. Winkler also received recognition from the County Council, which was presented by Councilwoman Mary Kay Sigaty.



HSCD Chair Justin Brendel presents the Conservation Education Award to Rhonda Winkler.



HSCD Cooperator of the Year Award recipient, Suzanne Kingsbury, and HSCD Chair Justin Brendel.

Howard SCD presented the Cooperator of the Year Award to Suzanne Kingsbury for her conservation efforts on her horse farm in Glenelg. Since starting her horse farm in 2016, Ms. Kingsbury has worked with Howard SCD to install a variety of best management practices (BMPs) to protect her soil and water resources and improve her operation in general. These conservation practices include watering troughs, heavy use areas, stream fencing, and rotational grazing. Ms. Kingsbury not only sought the technical assistance provided by Howard SCD, but she also took advantage of financial assistance programs to help reimburse some of the costs associated with installing these conservation practices. Ms. Kingsbury also received awards and recognition from the County Council, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and the USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service.

District's Cooperator Dinner



Former HSCD Supervisor Ken Clements is recognized by Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture with a Governor's Citation.



Merhlyn Barnes receives a Governor's Citation for her husband Bill from Hans Schmidt, Assistant Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

In addition to recognizing outstanding cooperators, the Howard SCD also presented two former Board Supervisors with the Contribution to Agriculture award. This award symbolizes a lifetime commitment to agriculture and conservation, and was presented to Ken Clements and former Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Bill Barnes. Throughout their time on the Board of Supervisors both gentlemen made significant contributions to the conservation mission of Howard SCD and helping the agricultural community of Howard County. Mr. Clements was the longstanding Treasurer for the Board of Supervisors and played a leading role in the acquisition of the new Howard SCD office building. As a well renowned excavator in Central Maryland, Mr. Barnes probably installed more conservation practices on farms over the last 40 years than anyone else. Mrs. Merhlyn Barnes received the award on behalf of her late husband. Both gentlemen were also presented Governor's Citations for their lifetime contributions to conservation. These were presented by the Assistant Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Hans Schmidt.

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Below: Just one of the many beautiful views that can be seen from the barn at Colmont Farm.



Below: Guests enjoying the aesthetics of the room, wonderful company and food.



Above: Guests trying their aim at pumpkin chunkin. Thanks to Tim McGrath and Chunkin' Up for the added fun.



Bald Eagles in Howard County

Every year, folks attending the University of Maryland Clarksville farm open house in early October stop by the Howard County Bird Club booth and inquire if we have "...seen the Bald Eagles". Since our national emblem, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (photos at: http://howardbirds.org/photo_page/member_photos/BaldEagle.htm), is recovering from near extinction, they are now nesting about the county. Our brief flirtation with the insecticide DDT, *dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane*, banned in the U.S. but still used guardedly in other parts of the world, wiped out the east coast population of the Peregrine Falcon subspecies *Falco peregrinus anatum* and put the Bald Eagle on the Endangered Species List. In 1972, the year DDT was banned, the hawk watch at Bake Oven Knob, PA tallied a season total of 16 Bald Eagles. Today, their 15-year yearly average is 249.

Recently, two new Eagle nests were discovered in Howard's Savage and Brookeville areas. Single nests on each of our two reservoirs to the south have existed for quite a while and a third long term aerie flourished in rural Ellicott City until just recently, when the birds may have relocated nearby. All told, this author can think of eight nest sites in the past decade in or bordering our county. Sadly, nest attempts do not guarantee breeding success. Possibly as many as four pairs have been active in a single year and sightings have become a common occurrence.



Photo Credit: Susan Earp

Many fly-overs are missed though, as the birds do not get their fully white heads and tails until their fourth year. Viewed from below, the varying white feathers on the underwings and body of the younger birds are often masked in the shade. Such sightings are easily



Immature Bald Eagle
Photo Credit: Susan Earp

mistaken for vultures. While their flight and form are distinctive, it can take a trained eye to "pull" young birds out of a kettle of Turkey Vultures.

Bald Eagles are opportunists when it comes to dining. Lots of folks have shared stories of them sitting on deer carcasses in open fields in winters past. They are also known to congregate when food becomes plentiful. The best winter location for local nature photographers and birders is Harford County's Conowingo Dam on the Susquehanna River. Here fish are regularly turned to chum by the dam turbines. A hundred or more Eagles can be found wintering there, with many in easy view from public access points below the dam.

In recent years, winter fish kills of Gizzard or Mud Shad, *Dorosoma cepedianum*, (<https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/Fish-Facts.aspx?fishname=American%20Gizzard%20Shad>) in our Triadelphia Reservoir and Lake Marburg, Codorus State Park in Pennsylvania have concen-

trated local winter populations as well. Bald Eagle counts in the mid-twenties were possible from Brighton dam during the last episode and the Codorus congregation made their local papers.

In the fall, northern Bald Eagles migrate in two waves down the Eastern Flyway. The first, birds that nested or fledged north of Hudson Bay, are seen soaring down the Appalachians in September, leap frogging birds to come later. The second wave follows in October when the weather south of the bay turns sour.

Just north of Reading PA, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's highest Bald Eagle yearly count is 556 in 2016. In 1972, they spotted a total of 14 individuals (<http://www.hawkmountain.org/>). Further to the west, Lake Superior's north shore directs migrating raptors to Duluth's Hawk Ridge in Minnesota (<https://www.hawkridge.org/>). They boast a single day record of 743 Bald Eagles in 1994 and a season record in 2017 of 6,099. In 1972, they tallied a total of just 23.

Bald Eagles are one of 15 species of raptor (not including owls and vultures) that may migrate over the county each spring and fall. And, one of seven from that list that may nest here. For most of us, the sighting of a Bald Eagle brings joy, having known a time when they were scarce. Unfortunately, perhaps many of our children will grow up taking them for granted and we can only hope for their continued recovery and that future generations will have the wisdom and courage to make the sacrifices required to protect such natural resources.

Data for this article came from the Hawk Migration Association of North America, <https://www.hmana.org/>.

Nutrient Management for the Chesapeake Bay

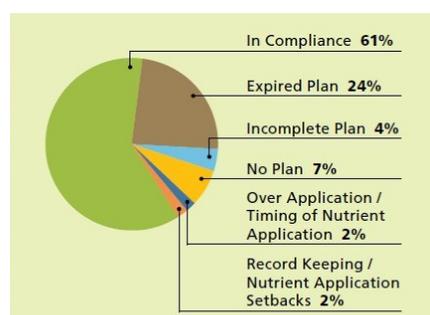
The Maryland Department of Agriculture is responsible for tracking and reporting Chesapeake Bay restoration accomplishments for the agricultural sector. This is done through the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) process, which includes 2-year milestones for implementing conservation practices in each county. With the help of the Soil Conservation Districts, MDA tracks the best management practices (BMPs) that farmers install in cooperation with the SCDs. Planting cover crops is one of the more prominent practices recorded, but everything from grassed waterways to manure storage structures has an associated nutrient reduction and gets credit in the WIP.

One of the key practices that the agricultural sector gets credit for is the implementation of Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs). The nutrient reduction associated with NMPs on 1.3 million acres of farmland across the

state has a significant impact on accomplishing WIP goals within the ag sector. MDA estimates that 5,322 farm operations in Maryland are required to have nutrient management plans. Through an on-farm auditing process, MDA tracks compliance and uses this data to calculate nutrient reductions. And while MDA estimates that 98% of farm operations have a NMP, their on-farm audits in fiscal year 2017 uncovered a compliance rate of only about 61%.

This level of NMP compliance creates a number of challenges for the ag sector in regard to meeting WIP goals. Basically, the agricultural community only gets 61% credit for the nutrient reductions associated with NMPs on those 1.3 million acres. This makes it more difficult for the ag sector to meet WIP goals and requires the implementation of many other BMPs to make up the difference. However, according to MDA's audit records the majority of

NMPs non-compliance issues are related to simply keeping plans updated. By just keeping plans up to date and having the appropriate record keeping, compliance would jump to over 90%! This includes items like the Annual Implementation Report or AIR. The record keeping and requirements of the NMP can be a hassle for farmers, but it also plays a critical role in reaching the nutrient reduction goals for the ag sector WIP.



Results of 1,016 On-Farm Audits (Fiscal Year 2017)

Agricultural Conservation Leasing Workshops

Why are conservation practices less common on leased farmland?
Lack of communication • Lack of knowledge • Lack of security in rental relationship

Do you rent farmland? Do you deal with on-farm conservation practices?

These workshops are meant for agricultural service providers, landowners and farmers. Attendees will learn communication and leasing strategies to overcome the challenges of implementing conservation practices on leased farmland.

Nutrient Management Continuing Education Credits Available!

More information and registration available at agresearch.umd.edu/agroecol. For questions, translation assistance, and/or special accommodations contact: Nancy Nunn, 410-827-8056 or nnunn@umd.edu

Intro Webinar

Nov. 15, 2018

Noon to 1 p.m.

[CLICK HERE](http://CLICK_HERE) or visit
agresearch.umd.edu/agroecol

Lower Shore

Dec. 10, 2018

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

31901 Tri-County Way,
Salisbury, Md.
go.umd.edu/conservationleasingls

Mid-Shore

Jan. 8, 2019

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Chesapeake College HPAC 127
1000 College Circle, Wye Mills, Md.
go.umd.edu/conservationleasingms

Southern MD

Jan. 17, 2019

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Charles County SCD
4200 Gardiner Road, Waldorf, Md.
go.umd.edu/conservationleasingmsd

Western MD

Jan. 23, 2019

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Frederick County Extension Office
330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, Md.
go.umd.edu/conservationleasingwmd

Central MD

Jan. 28, 2019

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Baltimore County Ag Center
1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, Md.
go.umd.edu/conservationleasingcmd



This material is based upon work 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



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