

Conservation Update

A Publication of the Charles Soil Conservation District

March 1, 2022



How Did Two Weeks Turn Into Two Years?

By: Luis Dieguez, District Manager

Normally our professional work is affected by local and sometimes regional events but who would have imagined a worldwide pandemic! In March of 2020 we had more questions than answers as to how we could keep our office operations functioning successfully. As we began to hear of office closures within the Charles County and Maryland State government agencies to address the pandemic, we took similar safety precautions and began to implement our own changes. Carrying out our office closure and transitioning into telework was a fairly smooth transition. Many of our employees had laptops and could already work remotely. A few had to scramble to set up a functional office environment at home. Everyone rose to the occasion and successfully communicated with each other and with our clientele. Our staff working with the agricultural community carried out necessary field work without placing others at risk. They continued performing their planning and technical duties remotely. Staff working on urban plan review had already been performing some electronic plan reviews, but with the pandemic, we transitioned solely to electronic plan reviews. Paper plan submissions stopped arriving at the District with the exception of regular mail and the occasional delivery. We also stopped in-office meetings. Although our adjustments were successful, we missed the personal interaction with colleagues and clients. Temperature checks, masks, social distancing and virtual meetings all became part of the regular work day. All of us who are fortunate to work for the Charles Soil Conservation District and the Maryland Department of Agriculture here in Waldorf benefited from the rural setting and the spacious facility. Social distancing was not a problem here. As the impact of the pandemic lessens, our office process will hopefully be returning to normal. We will continue to appreciate some of the changes that remain such as efficient virtual meetings and electronic plan reviews. We are, however, more than ready to get back to important field and in-office meetings with our farmers and others.

Mark Your Calendars! Spring 2022

MARCH 1	Cover Crop kill down (no incentive) begins
MAY 1	Cover Crop kill down (Delayed Termination Incentive) begins
MAY 13	Poster & Coloring Contest deadline
MAY 18	Annual Cooperators Dinner
JUNE 3	Last day for Cover Crop kill down
JUNE 3	Last day for Cover Crop reporting

*Be sure to check
out charlesscd.com
for calendar
updates!*



Charles SCD Annual Cooperators Dinner

By: Dee Dee Saunders, District Coordinator

The District is excited to announce the return of the Charles Soil Conservation District Annual Cooperator Dinner! We look forward to hosting the annual dinner once again to celebrate the agricultural community, share the accomplishments of the District, and honor the achievements of our Cooperator of the Year. Plan to join us for an open house that will inform and educate, followed by a delicious dinner on the lawn. We look forward to the gathering and the fellowship it offers returning to the farm.

Mark your calendars for the event - Wednesday, May 18th, and stay tuned for more details!

District Awarded Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit Outstanding District

By: Dee Dee Saunders, District Coordinator

Charles Soil Conservation District was recognized with the Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit Outstanding District Award at the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) Annual Conference Awards Banquet in Cambridge in August 2021. A vari-



ety of metrics are considered in the assessment including planning and activities, conservation efforts, advocacy, a variety of administrative functions and attendance, and education and outreach. Recognition of the Board and Staff's efforts and accomplishments is appreciated.

Finding Time for Fun!

September 2021 marked Charles SCD's first annual "Spirit Week". Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our annual dinner had to be rescheduled but we didn't let that stop us from finding another avenue to build bonds and have some fun. Each of the days that week included different themes for our staff to get creative. The daily themes included: Sports Team Day, Farmer/Western Day, Formal Day, Hawaiian Shirt Day, and Tie-Dye Day. Prior to Tie-Dye Day, we were able to collectively tie-dye shirts and masks (some of us tie-dyeing for the first time!). With all the laughs we had, we hope to make "Spirit Week" an annual tradition.



Supervisor Wes Tomlinson was also recognized at the awards ceremony for his five years of dedicated service as a Supervisor on the District board. Tomlinson served as an Associate Supervisor for seven years prior to becoming a Supervisor, and has served on the MASCD Bylaws and Operating Rules Committee since 2018.

Kudos to the District Board and Tomlinson for their vision and dedicated efforts in serving Charles County and the agricultural community.



Farewell to Our Past Employees...

By: Janina Jones, Soil Conservation Engineering Technician

We would like to take the opportunity to say goodbye to two of our Agricultural Technicians Udeni Leanage and LeeAnn Olthaus.

Udeni supported our office through surveying, staking, information gathering, designing and construction inspection. As of January 2021, Udeni accepted a position at the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, and we wish her all the best.

...and Hello to Our New Employees

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all our new employees: Janina Jones, Broderick Pascual, Taylor Quinn, and Christopher Swift.

Janina is joining Charles SCD as a a part time urban plan reviewer, focusing on residential building permits. Janina has a Bachelor's Degree in Marine Science from Coastal Carolina University and is currently working on her Master's in Water Resources Management.

Broderick, our new MDA Agricultural Technician, will be responsible for aiding the implementation of agricultural conservation plans and practices through conducting surveys, site inspections and providing design work. Broderick brings experience and familiarity of Charles County from his previous experience as a County Inspector.

Cover Crop 2021-2022

Cover crops are an environmentally friendly and economical resource in a farmer's effort to improve soil health. Cover crops recycle unused nutrients that remain in the soil from previous summer crops, protect fields against wind and water erosion, improve water absorption and retention, improve nutrient absorption and thereby reducing fertilizer usage and costs, and aid in sustained commercial crop yield increases.

Not only are cover crops an essential tool for farmers wanting to improve the overall soil health of their production fields, but they are one of the most cost-effective practices in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay clean up strategy.

Thank you to the 30 Charles County farmers that have planted 3,783 acres of cover crop during their

LeeAnn first joined us in July 2019 as a Grant Agricultural Technician before becoming an MDA Agricultural Technician. She was involved in assisting conservation engineers in site survey, design, and construction inspection in order to implement conservation practices. As of October 2021, LeeAnn accepted a new position as a contractor with the U.S. Department of the Navy. We wish her much success in her new position.

Taylor is joining us as an MDA Agricultural Planner and will be providing technical assistance to farmers and other stakeholders through the implementation of resource management plans and agricultural conservation practices. Taylor comes to us following two years of service in the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) through AmeriCorps and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Christopher is joining Charles SCD as a Grant Agricultural Planner, he will be providing assistance in the implementation of resource management plans and agricultural conservation practices. As a recent graduate with a B.S. in Geology from the University of Delaware, we look forward to the insights he will be able to share with us.



participation in this year's Maryland Cover Crop program. To learn more about the program look for details on the Charles SCD or Maryland Dept. of Agriculture websites, or feel free to contact Randy Sweeney or Jerry Spence at the Charles SCD. Sign-ups for the 2022-2023 program will be announced by MDA and will likely start in June.

2021 Urban Erosion & Sediment Control Summary

By: Tim Wells, Charles SCD Conservation Engineer, P.E.

The year of 2021 was a continuation of the roller coaster conditions for construction and land development in Charles County seen during 2020. A booming real estate market combined with supply chain issues, increasing and fluctuating material costs, and labor shortages continued the unprecedented conditions in the residential and commercial development. Weather conditions always present challenges, particularly concerning sediment and erosion controls, but long stretches of dry and favorable conditions especially during the summer and fall were beneficial compared to some of the larger storm events that were seen in 2020. As work progressed quickly in the field, many times unique circumstances required changes and plan revisions to effectively complete projects in a timely manner, while still preventing erosion leaving projects sites.



Here at the Charles Soil Conservation District we take pride in enforcing the state law requirements set forth in the 2011 Standards and Specifications for Sediment and Erosion Control issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment. These guidelines when applied to individual site development projects with various topography, soil types, and landscape positions significantly reduce erosion from site development into our local creeks, streams, rivers. It often requires creative and innovative engineering solutions, and it is nearly impossible to completely prevent erosion particularly with extreme (and poorly timed) storm events that exceed the design capacity of sediment control devices. We appreciate the continued hard work and coordination with forward thinking engineering firms, conscience contractors, and dedicated MDE and County inspection staff to prevent

sedimentation of local waterways and the protection of some of our most valuable natural resources in Charles County.



This past year marked the first full year that Charles SCD reviewed and issued approvals for sediment control plans electronically. The change from paper plan review to electronic was already in the planning stages after Charles County went fully electronic with their plan review process in late 2018, but when the Covid pandemic closed the office in March 2020, those plans were expedited, and electronic plan review and approval was implemented temporarily, and ultimately a formal process was developed and implemented. Bluebeam PDF plan review software allows for intuitive and detailed review of PDF plans, and an online filing system was developed to mirror our traditional paper system. Using the new software and transitioning from paper to digital plan review has certainly been an adjustment, but the potential improvements in efficiency have already been noticed and will continue to improve as the process is refined.

Overall for 2021, we reviewed a total of 90 new plan submittals and 219 plan revisions for sediment and erosions control in 2021. Of those submittals, a total of 161 new and revised approvals were granted for projects throughout Charles County. The Charles Soil Conservation District also reviews site development projects as part of Charles County Government's residential building permit process for single lot development of single family dwellings, townhouses, apartments, and other residential projects. As part of this process, SCD completed 1276 reviews and issued 1085 approvals.

Charles SCD would also like to take time to thank the tireless efforts for the County Inspections department.

2021 Urban Erosion & Sediment Control Summary (cont.)

By: Tim Wells, Charles SCD Conservation Engineer, P.E.

In addition to various other inspection responsibilities, the County inspectors are tasked with coordinating with contractors and ensuring proper implementation of approved sediment and erosion control plans. Often times, plans require revisions based on field conditions, construction schedules, weather, or other factors. The inspectors and contractors coordinate with the design engineers and SCD review staff to make changes that work on paper, meet the state law, but are also practical in the field given existing and proposed conditions. This is a task that can be chal-

lenging but is arguably the most important part of limiting sediment leaving the site and entering our local water systems. The County inspectors are the boots on the ground and truly the lynch pin of sediment and erosion control. Our seamless communication and cooperation is a valuable and valued asset and we look forward to our continued relationship.

If you see sedimentation in your local communities, please contact our office or County inspections staff. Everyone can do their part!

Envirothon—Back on the Farm

By: Dee Dee Saunders, District Coordinator & Charles County Envirothon Coordinator

The District is pleased to say the Charles County Envirothon is back in full swing this school year and has been able to hold both of the scheduled trainings thus far as *in-person* events at the District. We hosted our fall training in October with students from five of the county's seven public high schools participating. Our winter training, held on February 15, saw an increase with teams from six schools in attendance, and we look forward to all seven schools being represented at our spring training in March and competition at Gilbert Run Park in April. This is the 29th year for the Charles County Envirothon program and 32nd for Maryland Envirothon. Envirothon is an international educational program that provides hands-on training to high schoolers interested in natural resources. Topics covered include: soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife and a current issue that is timely to the area hosting the international NCF Envirothon. This year's current issue is *Waste to Resources* and represents a pressing environmental issue faced by the state of Ohio, the hosts of this year's NCF Envirothon.

Charles County Envirothon could not be the successful program it is without the support of the volunteers and cooperating agencies that provide their expertise in the training and testing of our participants. The District appreciates the assistance of our trainers: John Houser, John Markovich, Bob Eaton (Forestry); Prince George's Soil Conservation District (SCD) staffer, Heather Zdobysz (Aquatics); Jane Burgess with DNR's Wildlife Division (Wildlife); MDA/Charles SCD staffer,

Jerry Spence, and Nancy LaRoche of St. Mary's SCD (Soils); and our own Tim Wells and Janina Jones (Current Issue).



Charles SCD coordinates as well as funds the Charles County Envirothon program so that no school or student will have to incur a cost to participate. The District appreciates the financial sponsorship of our community supporters of this year's Charles County program including the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts and Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. If you or your organization are interested in donating to the Charles County Envirothon, feel free to check out our website for further program information or contact me with any questions (deedee.saunders@charlesscd.com).

Should you or a Charles County high schooler you know be interested in participating, be sure to check out our website for more information about the program including the coach contacts at each of our high schools: <https://charlesscd.com/envirothon/>.

What is Nutrient Trading and Why Should Farmers Care?

By: Jerry Spence, MDA Planner, Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist

Seven years ago, my supervisors asked that I attend a nutrient trading workshop at Stevenson College in Owings Mills, Maryland. This training was the culmination of years of coordination by MDA, MDE and EPA to produce the first version of what had become known as “Maryland’s Nutrient Trading Tool”. Though we have had some prospective interest in trades, to this point all the effort placed into developing the policies, programs and procedures has yet to yield fruit. Why? Perhaps you, the farmers in Charles County can tell us why?



Nutrient Trading is the voluntary relinquishing of the rights to apply nutrients (i.e., Nitrogen and Phosphorus) on a certain area of existing cropland in exchange for some type of monetary compensation from someone needing credits, for some predetermined amount of time. While this seems rather straightforward, the process must be verifiable.... enter government agencies. One of the

Conservation Planning for Horse Farms

By: Sara Lewis, Soil Conservation Planner Regional Equine Specialist

Most horse farms have mud, over grazed areas in pasture, and erosion. If you need help managing your pastures, mud, erosion, or any other resource concern on your horse farm contact Sara Lewis. Sara is an Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for this area and she specializes in Equine Conservation Planning. Sara works out of the Charles and St. Mary’s Soil Conservation District offices. Sara Lewis can be reached at the Charles County office: 301-638-3028, Cell: 240-925-2397, or Email: Sara.Lewis@md.nacdnet.net.

most fascinating aspects of Nutrient Trading is the concept of “baseline”. For the first time since the Clean Water Act was passed on October 18, 1972, government agencies (MDA, MDE, EPA) came to an agreement on what level of non-point source pollution was tolerable on farms. This “baseline” is a revolutionary concept. So now there is a tool to test your farm and see if you measure up to the baseline, or the minimum level of conservation needed to meet Clean Water Act levels for non-point source pollution. Scared yet? I know I was, at first. But as it turns out, most farms I tested through the tool have already met baseline or are just about meeting baseline. This knowledge is rather empowering, like knowing you’ve had COVID and realizing you likely have some immunity preventing reinfection, for some period at least. Not only is it nice to know if you are doing your part to keep water clean, but if you are willing to further reduce your nutrient inputs, you could possibly turn your great stewardship into money. How much money? No one knows. And perhaps this is why Nutrient Trading as a program in Maryland has never left the ground. No one wants to be first, afraid they will shortchange themselves on a market that is yet to be established.

So, the Charles SCD hereby asks the farmers of Charles County, why haven’t you been interested in the past, and what would make you interested in the future? How much money would it take for you to retire a few acres of land for 10 years? How about for 20 years? Please candidly let us know what you think.



How Can the Conservation Stewardship Program Help You?

By: Christopher Swift, Soil Conservation Agricultural Planner, SCD

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.



The program 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.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) can help you with...

- ◆ Scheduling timely planting and management of cover crops,
- ◆ Developing a grazing plan that will improve your forage base,
- ◆ Implementing no-till to reduce erosion or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat,
- ◆ and so much more.

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. CSP offers opportunities for producers to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying new conservation practices, enhancements, and bundles to help enhance natural resources and improve the operation.

For example, if you have been planting a cover crop, you may decide to try an enhancement for a multi-species cover crop or implement a deep-rooted cover crop to break up soil compaction.

If you decide to apply for CSP, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to select new CSP conservation activities based on your management objectives for your operation.

Once you choose the conservation practices or activities that best fit, and if your application is selected for funding, CSP offers annual payments for implementing these practices on your land and operating and maintaining existing conservation efforts. Want to take it a step further? CSP also offers bundles where you can select a suite of enhancements and receive a higher payment rate.

Contract payments are made annually based on the following components:

- ◆ Existing activity payment — payment to maintain the existing conservation based on the land uses and NRCS assessment of existing stewardship at the time of enrollment.
- ◆ Additional activity payment — payment to implement additional conservation activities.
- ◆ Supplemental payment — payment for adopting one of two systems:
 - ◆ Adopting or improving on resource-conserving crop rotation
 - ◆ Adopting advanced grazing management (AGM)

NRCS may provide a minimum annual payment of \$1,500 and a maximum annual payment of \$40,000 over the 5-year contract.

New CSP applications must be received by April 2, 2021, to be considered for this funding period. The application deadline for FY 2022 CSP renewals is April 7, 2021. Please contact your local USDA Service Center at 301-934-9588 for more information.

Equipment for Rent

The District's agricultural equipment rental program remains available to all county farmers for aid in the installation and management of conservation practices. In the previous growing season, the equipment has allowed producers to plant commodity and cover crops while minimizing soil disturbance, manage and maintain residue for healthy soils, install livestock fencing on new and renovated pasture land, and install conservation cover for wildlife and erosion control. Current equipment available includes a Great Plains 7ft No-Till seed drill, a Wheathart hydraulic fence post pounder, a John Deere 1590 10ft No-till drill, a twelve foot Great Plains Turbo-Till, and our newest piece of equipment, a seven foot Land Pride No-Till over-seeder for pastures and hay-land. All of our equipment is stored at the District's Waldorf office. Check out our website for equipment details, towing and horsepower needs, insurance requirements and scheduling. charlesscd.com/equipment-rental



7' No-Till Over seeder

- 7 foot planting width
- 8 foot transportation width
- Ground driven with a 7.5 bushel capacity main grass seed box and a 1.7 bushel capacity small seed box
- 40+ hp tractor minimum
- Single point hydraulic controls
- Standard duty pick-up truck with tow package
- Straight pin hitch hookup
- Standard RV style electric connections

Post Pounder

- Round posts only
- Joystick hydraulic controls
- Adjustable hammer height accommodates different post lengths
- Easy operation and transportation
- Standard 1/2 ton truck
- Pin hitch



7' No-Till Drill

- 7-foot planting width
- 10-foot transportation width
- 7.5-inch row spacing
- 40 hp tractor minimum
- Single-point hydraulic controls
- Standard duty pick-up truck with tow package
- Straight pin hitch hookup with standard RV style electric connection



10' No-Till Drill

- 10-foot planting width
- 7.5-inch row spacing with front gang lockout for planting 15-inch rows
- 3.5-bushel capacity main seed bin, 1.5-bushel capacity for small seed box
- Front caster wheels for low tongue weight
- 85 hp tractor manufacturer minimum recommended
- Single-point hydraulic controls
- 10.5-foot transport width
- Implement has no brakes and weighs 7,000 lbs
- Heavy duty pickup or farm truck needed
- Straight pin hitch hookup with standard RV style electric connection



12' Turbo Till

- Useful in all soil conditions
- Easy and quick depth adjustment
- Constant level hitch
- 100 hp minimum
- Front-wheel drive
- Single-point hydraulic controls
- Front weights and/or front loader
- Tractor preferred
- 12-foot towing width

Visit our website or contact the Charles SCD Office at 301-638-3028 for more information.

Charles Soil Conservation District
Board of Supervisors

Charles Rice	Chairman
Jeffrey Bossart	Vice Chairman
Jack Welch	Treasurer
Wes Tomlinson	Member
Wayne Hancock	Member
Alan Leslie	Secretary, U.M. Extension
Kevin Warring	Associate Supervisor
Lynne Wheeler	Associate Supervisor

Charles SCD
2022 Office Closures

- > **Jan 17**, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- > **Feb 21**, Presidents' Day
- > **Apr 15**, Good Friday
- > **May 30**, Memorial Day
- > **July 4**, Independence Day
- > **Sept 5**, Labor Day
- > **Oct 10**, Columbus Day
- > **Nov 8**, Election Day
- > **Nov 11**, Veterans' Day
- > **Nov 24-25**, Thanksgiving

If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please send your information to info@CharlesSCD.com



Charles Soil Conservation District
4200 Gardiner Road
Waldorf, MD 20601