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Calvert Soil Conservation District

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



www.calvertsoil.org

410-535-1521, Ext. 3

Message from the District Conservationist



Mitch LeMueix

USDA-NRCS District Conservationist

Calvert & Anne Arundel Counties

Mitchell.Lemueix@usda.gov

2023 was another exciting year for Calvert Soil Conservation District. In 2023 Calvert SCD processed a total of \$100,731.39 in payments to help facilitate conservation projects directly impacting Calvert County agricultural operations. In addition to another great year, 2024 is looking to break more records for Calvert County with a record number of applications coming in. With the Inflation Reduction Act providing additional funding opportunities for Calvert's cooperators, this could very well mean we are continuing our trend of success moving forward into 2024.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is giving \$19.5 billion (yes - Billion!) over 5 years to help farmers fight climate change through USDA-NRCS programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Some favorable conservation practices include planting cover crops, prescribed grazing (see page 10), and no-till farming. Farmers can start the application process by contacting me at Mitchell.Lemueix@usda.gov, or 410-535-1521, Ext. 3.

Message from Acting Assistant District Manager



Ashley Brown

Acting District Manager

Ashley.Brown@calvertcountymd.gov

Hello, I'm Ashley Brown. I am relatively new to the world of Soil Conservation, having been with the district just three years. However, one thing I learned rather quickly is that "other duties as assigned" has a very broad meaning! As such, and until further notice, I am the Acting Assistant District Manager for Calvert SCD.

I want to talk about why signing up and joining the District as a cooperator is one of the best things you can do for your land, Calvert County, and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

First, I recognize you are hesitant to sign up. Maybe you are weary of the government; maybe you feel like your land isn't worth the trouble; or maybe you disagree that your land even needs assistance. We've heard it all; but I will tell you this: it is only a matter of time before saving your soil will become of greater importance than the aforementioned. And we are here to help.

The District provides a variety of benefits to its cooperators, including:

- Access to the equipment rental program (see more on page 8). Our fence post-driver, 7' and 10' no-till drills, and 8' Brillion seeder are popular conservation equipment available for cooperators to rent at a low cost.
- A conservation planner and/or technician will work with you to build a conservation plan catered to your farm's particular strengths, weaknesses, and needs. No two farms are the same!
- Qualify and benefit for cost-share programs like the Maryland Agriculture Cost Share (MACS) or EQIP.
- Benefits for everyone. Working with the District helps us, too, to achieve the 2025 Chesapeake Bay WIP (Watershed Implementation Plan) goals. These goals are aimed at reducing nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediment runoff into the bay's watershed, thus adding to the beauty and profitability of one of our region's most valuable resources, the Chesapeake Bay.

If you are even a little interested in learning more, the process to sign up is very simple and it begins by completing the one-page District Cooperator Agreement that can be found on our website: www.calvertsoil.org.

All in all, I am looking forward to a new year full of new goals, challenges, accomplishments, teamwork, and more importantly, I look forward to hearing from you!

2023 ENGINEERING & PLANNING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

35	Conservation Plans Completed
2,633.6AC	Conservation Acres Planned
9	New Cooperators
\$100,731.39	Payments Processed

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES INSTALLED

1.00	Barnyard Clean Water Diversion
57.48AC	Conservation Cover
404.53AC	Conservation Crop Rotation
1,746AC	Cover Crop
0.30AC	Critical Area Planting
4.95AC	Critical Area Planting - Construction
8.00AC	Forage Harvest Management
1.00	Grade Stabilization Structure
0.59AC	Grassed Waterway
0.01AC	Heavy Use Area Protection
42.00AC	Herbaceous Weed Control
6,256.00sqft	High Tunnel System
12.00	Lined Waterway or Outlet
400.00ft	Livestock Pipeline
1.00AC	Mulching
365.60AC	Nutrient Management
0.50AC	Obstruction Removal
1.70AC	Pasture & Hay Planting
156.50AC	Prescribed Grazing
216.23AC	Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till
241.14AC	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till
0.50AC	Stormwater Runoff Control
1.00	Stream Crossing
3,372.00ft	Subsurface Drain
1.00	Watering Facility
3.68AC	Wildlife Habitat Planting

EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL REVIEWS

953	Site Plan Reviews (all types); 226AC Impacted
31	Commercial Preconstruction Meetings



Calvert SCD's 75th Anniversary 1948-2023

The idea of Soil Conservation began in 1935, when the Dust Bowl literally swept into Washington, D.C. Hugh Bennett, (aka "the father of conservation") was testifying on Capitol Hill when it swept in; he threw back the curtains to reveal a black sky filled with dust. This quickly caught the attention of Congress and President Roosevelt. Roosevelt enacted a soil conservation district legislation recommending governors to propose and form Districts to install conservation practices. And so, 75 years ago, on June 10, 1948, Calvert Soil Conservation District was established.

Circa 1955, Calvert SCD's first District Manager, Calvert Norfolk, was quoted saying "farming is so different today, it's unbelievable." This was when farming was going from horse and plow, to using tractors and electricity. From horse and plows to GPS guided tractors, from pen and paper to artificial intelligence, from office space to remote work, only time will tell what the future of farming and District operations will look like. Norfolk's quote will ring true for generations to come.

The District has relocated numerous times, from the courthouse, to the Johnson Building, to the Prince Frederick Post Office, to the Kaine Building and finally here at 489 Main Street. In 2025, when the new County Administration Building opens, the District will have permanent office space on the top floor.

The historic 75th Anniversary and 2019 Cooperators' Dinner was held in March. With an audience of nearly 300, the District received proclamations and citations from the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners, USDA-NRCS, MDA, the Maryland General Assembly, and Senator Michael Jackson's office.

Thompson's Seafood once again provided a fantastic dinner and with excellent service. Dessert was provided by Wildewood Pastry Shop and Mrs. Moo's Icecream. Door prizes included donations from the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners, Horsmon Farm, No Tyme to Cook, Friday's Creek Winery, Monnett Farms, Battle Creek Beef, Linda & Jake's Greenhouses, and Calvert Soil Conservation District's Board of Supervisors.

2019 Cooperator of the Year *James & Jennifer Dowell, Tyverne Creek Farm*

Cooperators since 2005, James and Jennifer Dowell purchased the 203-acre, agriculturally preserved property that became Tyverne Creek in 2015, and began working with the District to help plan their cattle operation.

By converting the farm to a less intensive operation and adapting new practices to protect soil and water resources, they have built a sustainable operation to be proud of. By fencing their cattle out of the Patuxent River and its tributaries, and committing to improvements in their grazing system, they are working to keep nutrients out of the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. By choosing to restrict the use of herbicides and planting areas of the farm to attract and support pollinators such as bees and butterflies, they have created valuable habitat for these critically important species.

These efforts to protect and enhance the soil and water resources of the farm are just a few of the examples of the Best Management Practices they have installed in cooperation with the District. Through their hard work and careful management these practices are helping to save the Bay, and are setting a model for sustainability and resource conservation in Calvert County. We commend them for their commitment as they have strived to make their vision for Tyverne Creek Farm a reality.

The Dowells received ample recognition at Calvert SCD's Annual Cooperators' Dinner held in March 2023. With an audience of nearly 300, the Dowells received proclamations from representatives of the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners, USDA-NRCS, MDA, the Maryland General Assembly, and Calvert County's Senator Michael Jackson. Perhaps their most anticipated award was the 2019 Calvert SCD Cooperators of the Year barn sign, presented by Tommy Briscoe, Calvert SCD Chair. The Dowells were thrilled to affix the sign to their barn after 4 years of canceled dinners due to covid.

James and Jennifer, for your exemplary stewardship and dedication to conservation, we thank you. Congratulations to these outstanding farm stewards!



2023 ENVIROTHON

CONGRATULATIONS NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL! CALVERT COUNTY ENVIROTHON 1ST PLACE TEAM



Pictured left to right: Jasmine Simpson, Raleigh Sterling, Sasha Barley, Eleanor Cole, Addison Fortenberry, Ana Reinhardt, and teacher Mrs. O'Donnell

The Envirothon is an environmentally-based problem-solving competition for high school students. Teams are made up of 5 to 7 students who work together to study Maryland's natural resources over the course of the school year. All topics are very hands-on and include practical skills and trainings taught by experts in each field.

The competition was held April 20, 2023, at King's Landing Park in Huntingtown, MD. The students competed in the resource categories: aquatics, forestry management, soil conservation, wildlife management, and a miscellaneous conservation topic.

The first-place team of this year's Calvert County Envirothon was Northern High School with 347 points out of a possible 400 points. Calvert High School placed second with 341 points, and third was Huntingtown High School with 327.5 points.

The Northern High School team traveled to Swanton, MD, June 15-16, 2023, for the Maryland State Envirothon competition. Northern High School proudly represented Calvert County and placed third in Maryland! Congratulations!

Envirothon has many sponsors including the Calvert County Soil Conservation District, Calvert Forestry Board, Calvert County Natural Resource Division, Morgan State University Estuarine Research Center, American Chestnut Land Trust, and the CHESPAX program of Calvert County Public Schools.

We would like to extend a special thank you to Ron Babcock of Calvert Soil Conservation District (left) and Chuck Gustin of Calvert High School (center) for their dedication to Envirothon's mission. They are both retiring in 2023 with 33 and 30 years respectively! We wish you the best in your retirement. Linda Subda, CHESPAX member and Envirothon leader (right), presents retirement cakes to Mr. Babcock and Mr. Gustin.



**Congratulations Northern High School
1st in the 2023 Calvert County Envirothon &
3rd in the Maryland State Competition!**



2023 Cooperator of the Year The Phipps Family Mead's Lane Farm



The Phipps family, deeply rooted in Calvert County since the 1800s, boasts a rich legacy of conservation. In 1966, the late William Phipps was recognized as the Cooperator of the Year, and tonight we extend that honor to his wife, Mrs. Margaret Phipps, his son Mike Phipps, and the entire Phipps family, collectively known as Mead's Lane Farm. Interestingly enough, the late William Phipps could not attend his 1966 Cooperator of the Year banquet due to having broken his leg!

Encompassing 70+ acres, Mead's Lane Farm sits on both sides of Route 4 in Owings. One of their tobacco barns, constructed in the 1800s, originally stood directly in the way of what is now Route 4. It was successfully relocated several hundred feet to the western side of Route 4, where it has stood ever since. Reflecting on her youth, Mrs. Phipps fondly recalls learning the art of canning peaches at the age of 13 and selling them at the local train station. During high school, she was heavily involved in the family's tobacco planting and harvesting operation. While the Phipps family has since transitioned into a hay and cattle operation, they continue the tradition of planting tobacco to this day.

Mead's Lane Farm was featured in January 2022 on an episode of Maryland Public Television's Farm & Harvest program. In the narrative, Mike Phipps discusses the tobacco buy-out in the early 2000's and tobacco operations today. The Phipps have installed countless BMPs as cooperators; some are watering facilities, a spring development, prescribed grazing, stream crossings, and grade stabilizations.

We look forward to celebrating their conservation efforts as 2023 Cooperator of the Year at the 19th Cooperators' Dinner in March 2024.

SMADC Grant Funds New Equipment for the Equipment Rental Program



Post Driver with Hydraulic Vibrating Head
Prince Frederick, MD



Overseeder
St. Leonard, MD

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) generously provided grant funding to Calvert SCD for the purchase of two new pieces of equipment for the District's Equipment Rental Program. The new overseeder and post-driver are now available and ready to rent in the tri-county area. To utilize this program, you must be a cooperator with your county's Soil Conservation District and have a farm plan on record. For more information, contact the us at CalvertSoil@calvertcountymd.gov or 410-535-1521, Ext. 3. With assistance from the Calvert County Department of Communications and Media Relations, the District was able to make a new safety video for the new post-driver. It can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-RD3eHk6CQ>. Thank you, SMADC!

Calvert County Fair

SOIL & CONSERVATION

TRIVIA!

Can you get 5 points?

Yellow = 1 Point (Easy)

Green = 2 Points (Medium)

Pink = 3 Points (Hard)

5 points wins
any prize!

- Ceramic Coaster
- Tumbler
- Thermometer
- Rain Gauge

Calvert SCD staff volunteer annually at the Calvert County Fair as representatives of Calvert SCD. At the booth fairgoers are introduced to local water and soil conservation practices, especially for farmers and kids. Over the course of the event, the booth was visited by thousands. To encourage visitors to stop by, we created a Soil Trivia game in which participants would answer a series of questions to win a prize: a ceramic coaster, rain gauge, sticker, pencil, thermometer, or a tumbler.

Can you get 5 points?

1. What color is a John Deere tractor? (1 point)
 2. What kind of trees do acorns come from? (1 point)
 3. What season is best to plant grass? (2 points)
 4. What is the number one crop grown in America? (2 points)
 5. What is another name for soil layers? (3 points)
 6. How long does it take for a Styrofoam cup to decompose? (3 points)
- Answers on page 11.



Chesapeake Oyster Alliance Partnership



Since 2022, Calvert SCD is a proud sponsor of the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance. We are looking forward to a successful and fruitful partnership. "The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance is a coalition of non-profits, community organizations, oyster growers, and others dedicated to helping recover the Bay's oyster population by putting 10 billion oysters in the Bay by 2025. As the alliance continues to grow, we hope that this Facebook group can serve as a helpful, centralized space for partners to share photos, news, and updates that relate to our shared goal." (Facebook, Chesapeake Oyster Alliance, 2023).



Ryan St Laurent, Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist, has led the conversation for the District to implement oysters as a form of shoreline protection while also improving water quality in the Bay. Contact Ryan for more information!

Southern Maryland Represents MDA at the Maryland 5-Star Event at Fair Hill

By: Eileen Beard



This year the Maryland 5 Star at Fairhill was held from October 19th to 22nd. This competition draws thousands of spectators from around the world to watch the best of the best horse and rider teams compete. Eventing is a tough sport, where each horse and rider team compete in Dressage, Cross Country Jumping and Stadium Jumping over the course of one weekend. There are only 7 such events of this caliber held around the world, 2 being held in the United States. Olympic Eventing is rated as a 3 Star Event. The more stars, the tougher the challenges.

This is the third year for the Maryland 5 Star at Fairhill. Maryland Department of Agriculture, Office of Resource Conservation has had an outreach booth all three years. This year Adam Lyon (MDA Patuxent Regional Coordinator), Taylor Quinn (MDA Regional Planner), Jennifer Carlson (MDA Regional Planner), and Eileen Beard (MDA Regional Planner) staffed the booth. The goal is to talk to spectators and let them know the services MDA, Districts and partners provide to help landowners/operators. We targeted the Maryland 5 Star to reach out to horse farms across the state, but we have talked with horse owners, horse farms owners, dairy farmers, hay farmers, homeowners, staff from other state, federal and local agencies, from all over the country. Occasionally we even get competitors stopping by the booth. Visitors from other states are impressed by our unique partnership as they often have to spend time tracking down information from several different departments/entities in their home states. This is the second year we enticed horse farm owners to come talk to us and enter a chance to win an MDA logo saddle pad (we all know horse people are addicted to saddle pads!). Our pasture sticks were also popular giveaways. With all of our pamphlets, brochures, rain gauges, eye glass wipes, stickers, coasters... no one walked away empty handed and we often had repeat visitors.

The Maryland 5 Star at Fairhill will be held October 17th to 20th in 2024. If you want to see the best Eventing riders and horses in the world compete, this is the place. Be sure to stop by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Office of Resource Conservation booth!



Jennifer Carlson, Taylor Quinn, and Eileen Beard pose in front of Eventing horse jump.



Taylor Quinn and Eileen Beard arrive at Fair Hill.



Boyd Martin, 3x Olympian and 2021 5-Star Champion, stopped by the booth!



Buttercup, the life-size mini-horse mascot, hangs out by the booth!

Prescribed Grazing

Livestock are selective about the plants they eat. They tend to repeatedly graze some plants and ignore others. Selective grazing weakens the more desirable plants and allows unwanted plants to thrive and multiply. Nearly all pastures have areas where livestock concentrate, such as around water, bedding grounds, and feed grounds. If the pasture is continuously used, these areas become overused, resulting in pasture deterioration. Grazing and resting grassland plants in a planned sequence increases the vigor of better plants, giving them a chance to grow and multiply. Therefore, gradually increasing the number of high-quality plants per acre. Improved grass conditions increase livestock production, improves wildlife habitat, reduces soil erosion, and conserves water. By resting pastures, overused areas are allowed to become productive. Simply put, prescribed grazing management is balancing the needs of the key forage producing plants (adequate leaf area and healthy root systems) with the needs of the grazing animal (adequate quantity and quality of forage).

To Apply Prescribed Grazing

To achieve this balance and meet the goals of the grazing operation, a prescribed grazing system involving multiple pastures is necessary. The following criteria should be considered when developing the grazing management plan.

To Maintain Prescribed Grazing

Control all noxious weeds, protect high impact areas from erosion, determine degree of use and grazing patterns on all grazing units, inspect and maintain all water developments and fences, determine if rest periods were adequate, change season of use, and develop next year's grazing plan.

Species	Minimum - Optimum Height of Vegetative Growth in Inches	Approximate Date
Alfalfa	6-10	May 15
Big Bluestem	8-14	July 1
Crested wheatgrass	4-6	April 20
Green needlegrass	6-8	May 15
Intermediate/pubescent wheatgrass	8-14	May 15
Kentucky bluegrass	4-6	May 7
Reed canarygrass	8-8	May 7
Sideoats grama	4-6	June 20
Smooth brome grass	8-14	May 7
Switchgrass	12-20	June 20
Western wheatgrass	6-10	May 15

Gully Busters

It is no secret that Calvert County is riddled with gully erosion problems. It seems you cannot walk a single farm without finding a gully. Some are small ankle twisters, but others could fit multiple houses in them. Whether a groundhog borough or a spring beginning a head cut, these gullies wreak havoc on our land. With more impervious surfaces being built, it is increasing peak storm flows. With more concentrated water comes more erosion. The tried-and-true method to repair, slow, or stop head cuts is essentially to "fill it with junk." I have seen bricks, brush, hay bales, wheels, and even refrigerators used to try and stop head cuts. The problem is water does not go through any of these, it just goes around. Often, these quick fixes exacerbate the problem and end up creating a much larger gully than would have formed otherwise. My recommendation? Don't put anything in an active gully!

Reducing erosion and repairing a gully is very important and the earlier the repair, the better. To do so, it requires some sort of structure to carry water from a higher elevation to a lower, stable outlet. These can cost an individual anywhere from \$15 thousand to over \$1 Million. For our farmers, this is a huge cost of operation that does not have a return on investment. It only allows them to continue farming their valuable land. Luckily, there are federal and state conservation cost-sharing programs available to support gully repairs.



A great example of a grassed waterway is of Mr. Donald and Barbara Cox's farm in Owings. Excessive runoff from Route 4 was causing a gully downstream that would cut their fields in half. With cost-share assistance from the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share (MACS) program and technical assistance from the NRCS, MDA, and Calvert SCD, the Cox's installed over 200 feet of grassed waterway to carry runoff from the highway through their field, and into the rock chute, where it carries the flows to a stable outlet, and existing stream. You can see the project on the right side of Route, just past the 2-4 split. Overall, the project was very successful, having been carried out by a local contractor; working with all parties was a joyous experience.



District Happenings

New Faces Around the District



Hello! I'm Riley Strain, I'm a freshman Biology and Environmental Science double major at Stevenson University. I am a member of the men's swim team and the Red Cross Club. Over the summer, I worked on reorganizing the filing system and assisted with surveying at Breezy Point Beach and Calvert Pines Senior Center. I plan to take my experience and connections here further into the epidemiology and environmental health fields.

I'm Nick Braciszewski, a former Navy ordnance technician originally from southern New Jersey. After eight years of service, I worked at NAS Pax River as a contractor while earning my B.S. in Fish and Wildlife Management. Following graduation, I gained valuable experience through an internship in the conservation division on base. In September 2023, I joined MDA at Calvert Soil Conservation and so far, it has been a great experience. I am learning something new every day and really enjoy getting out and meeting the farmers and landowners of Calvert County. I hope to contribute to the great work the District does. My wife and I have 3 beautiful, crazy daughters that keep us busy but in my free time I like to hunt, fish, surf, exercise or just be outdoors. I have enjoyed living in southern Maryland for the past 7 years and it is an honor to be able to work in the county I call home.



MASCD Outstanding Employee of the Year Enters Retirement

At the 2023 MASCD Annual Summer Meeting in Cambridge, MD, Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist Ron Babcock received recognition for being voted 2022 Outstanding Employee of the Year! This award is presented to an employee who over time has consistently demonstrated considerable leadership and excellence of multiple duties and responsibilities. Over his career, Ron has surveyed and monitored the construction of countless projects, the largest being a multi-million dollar project at the Chesapeake Bay Detachment Naval Research Lab in Chesapeake Beach, MD. Ron has proved an invaluable asset to the District, so much that so that this is not his first time earning the MASCD Outstanding Employee of the Year award; in 2002 he was also recognized! We are blessed to have worked with Ron during his 33-year career at Calvert SCD. Congratulations Ron, and try not to work so hard in retirement! Thank you for everything, Ron, it has been a joy working with you! You will truly be missed.



Bruce Yerkes presents Ron with MASCD Outstanding Employee of the Year



Soil Trivia Answers (pg. 8): 1. Green; 2. Oak Trees; 3. Autumn; 4. Corn; 5. Horizons; 6. 500 years

CALVERT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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All district programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap. Calvert Soil Conservation District's Annual Report is published regularly to provide information to the land user.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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Cooperating Agencies

Calvert County

Calvert County Board of County Commissioners

Department of Planning and Zoning

Department of Public Works

Department of Economic Development

Department of Inspections and Permits

Calvert Marine Museum

Natural Resources Division

Department of Parks & Recreation

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Board

State of Maryland

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Maryland Department of the Environment

MD Department of Natural Resources

MD Forest, Parks & Wildlife Service

MD State Soil Conservation Committee

UMD Cooperative Extension

United States Government

USDA Farm Service Agency

USDA Rural Development

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Environmental Protection Agency

Others

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Maryland Farm Bureau

National Association of Conservation Districts

Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission