



St. Mary's Soil Conservation District

2023 Annual Report
April 2024

Soil Stewardship Week
April 28th - May 5th

Message from the Chairman

Robert "Bobby" Cooper



Welcome to a very wet start of 2024. Weather folks say this has been the fourth wettest winter on record. Mild temperatures and very little snowfall held out for the entire winter months but we sure had our share of rain. These excessive amounts of water can cause erosion problems for a lot of folks, including construction and building sites, ponds and ditches overflowing and eroding, waterways that have filled in with sediment or washed out, and numerous things that can happen with the large amounts of rain in a short amount of time.

With that being said there are ways and programs that can assist you with correcting erosion problems and other problems on your farms and properties through cost share. There is quite a bit of money available right now thru EQIP and the MACS office to assist landowners with installing Best Management Practices on their farms. So if you are thinking of installing a waterway or have an area that is eroding or anything that would save your soil from being lost, now would be a good time to look into a cost share program that would fit your needs. Just call the St Mary's Soil Conservation office and they will get the ball rolling for you.

On February 23rd we held our 69th annual cooperators dinner held at the Bay District Firehouse to honor our cooperator and contractor of the year. Bruce gave a nice slideshow of the districts accomplishments from the past year. It was a good turnout and we thank all that came.

We bid farewell to Jane Sanders, the District's Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist for 25 years. She retired in May to spend more time with family and concentrate more of her time at the very popular Tobacco Barn Distillery where her and her husband are business partners.

We also have a few new employees that have recently joined the team at the Soil Conservation office. Garrett Sterling has joined us as the Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist, Leah Langford as a MDA planner, Georgia Bowling as a MDA Technician, and Chase Kolstrom as a RC&D/NRCS Forester. You can read more about them in their bios later in this report. We welcome all four and look forward to working with them in the district office.

Hoping for a great 2024 for everyone!



2024 NACD Stewardship Theme

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Special points of interest:

- NRCS Update from District Conservationist
- Coloring Contest Winners for 2023
- The District Welcomes 4 new staff members to the Partnership
- Sassafras Creek Farm named St. Mary's SCD's 2023 Cooperator of the Year

District History and Background

The St. Mary's Soil Conservation District is an independent political subunit of state government which was created on November 14, 1941. The legal charter was issued by the state of Maryland on January 5, 1942.

The District is governed by a board of supervisors who are local county residents. Members are appointed to five (5) year terms by the State Soil Conservation Committee, with recommendations from the County Commissioners, Farm Bureau, and Cooperative Extension Service. There are five voting members, one non-voting member and two associate members. These supervisors regularly attend meetings to keep informed on local, state and national issues, which could have an impact on farmers, landowners and residents within our area. The District's technical staff is provided by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture and from the District itself.



Black Angus Cattle - Chaptico, Maryland - 1985

Each year the District prepares detailed budget requests for administrative and operating funds from MDA and St. Mary's County to meet its goals and objectives. In calendar year 2023 the District received operating funds of \$115,726 from the County, \$36,607 from MDA, and \$74,033 from the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund. Additional support provided by MDA and NRCS is in the form of staff (\$625,000) and cost share support (\$289,577) for best management practices installed through the Maryland Agriculture Cost Share (MACS) Program and Environmental Quality Assistance Program (EQIP).

2023 District Highlights

- Held 12 monthly meetings, which were scheduled for the first Thursday of each month and are open to the public
- Reviewed Memorandums of Understanding between the District and cooperating agencies at regular Board Meetings
- Attended the Winter and Summer Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) Meetings (Winter Meeting was virtual event)
- Attended quarterly MASCD Board of Directors Meetings (Hybrid Meetings)
- Maintained membership in state and national soil conservation district associations
- Cooperate with Maryland Department of the Environment on the local sediment control program
- Chairman Bobby Cooper and District Manager Bruce Young serve on the Southern Maryland RC&D Board
- Member of the County's Development Review Application Process for site and subdivision approval
- Advisory member of St. Mary's County Agriculture, Seafood, & Forestry Board
- Tom Koviak, Haley Carter, Luke Mudd, Sara Lewis, Nancy LaRochelle, and Savannah Dobbins are certified as Nutrient Management Consultants by MDA
- Member of the local WIP III Team
- Developed a workload analysis and a plan of operations for fiscal year 2023
- Maintained a list of contractors that do conservation work
- Assisted landowners in making determinations for acceptance into Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
- District staff are members of the State Envirothon Committee
- Bruce Young and Haley Carter are representatives on the Maryland Cost Share Technical Advisory Committee and Cover Crop Technical Advisory Committee
- Member of MASCD Endowment Committee
- District owns five pieces of conservation equipment for lease to county farmers. All equipment was purchased with funds provided by SMADC
- Attended the Southern Maryland Development Commission Meet and Greet for new Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks
- Participated in the MASCD and MDA organized District Manager Roundtable Meetings
- District staff assisted in the distribution of food at two (2) Farmers Feeding St. Mary's events funded by Commissioners of St. Mary's County
- Bruce Young and Haley Carter attended the Nutrient Management Summit hosted by MDA and the University of Maryland
- Staff held Envirothon fundraisers at two (2) events—the Big Yellow Duck Event and the Christmas Tree Lighting on the Square



Agricultural Accomplishments

334 BMPs
Protecting 6130.6 acres

69 Soil Conservation Water Quality
Plans
on 6808 acres



Best Management Practice	Extent Done	Unit
325 - High Tunnel System	8,800.0	SF
327 - Conservation Cover	28.1	AC
328 - Conservation Crop Rotation	1,718.1	AC
329 - Residue and Tillage Management	397.8	AC
340 - Cover Crop	420.2	AC
342A - Critical Area Planting - HEL	4.2	AC
342B - Critical Area Planting - Cons	4.1	AC
345 - Residue and Tillage Management	1,224.7	AC
362 - Diversion	286.0	FT
382D - Non Streamside Fence	830.0	FT
390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover	2.0	AC
393 - Filter Strip	2.0	AC
410 - Grade Stabilization Structure	4.0	NO
412 - Grassed Waterway	0.2	AC
422 - Hedgerow Planting	1.0	AC
468 - Lined Waterway or Outlet	25.0	FT
484 - Mulching	4.4	AC
500 - Obstruction Removal	1.8	AC
511 - Forage Harvest Management	15.5	AC
512 - Pasture & Hay Planting	17.3	AC
516 - Livestock Pipeline	838.0	FT
528 - Prescribed Grazing	210.9	AC
561 - Heavy Use Area Protection	0.1	AC
570 - Stormwater Runoff Control	5.4	NO
590 - Nutrient Management	1,905.3	AC
612 - Tree/Shrub Establishment	0.5	AC
614 - Watering Facility	1.0	NO
620 - Underground Outlet	40.0	FT
644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Manag	1.5	AC
645 - Upland Wildlife Habitat Manage	170.9	AC

Urban Accomplishments

Plans Reviewed	753
Plans Approved	257
Acres on Approved Plans	604.41
Development Review Apps	63
Forest Harvest	24 for
E&S Plans	1016.5 ac
Pre-Construction Meetings	125
Concept SWM Plan	44
Approvals	



OTHER COST SHARE PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Cover Crop

45 applicants with 4751.6 acres certified

Poultry Litter Transport

19 applicants for 6,296 tons imported

Outreach & Education

- ◇ Met with congressional delegates concerning legislation that would affect St. Mary's County
- ◇ Sponsor of the Southern Maryland Crops Conference
- ◇ Retain records of approved sewage sludge permits in the District office
- ◇ Actively promoted and assisted landowners in applying for MACS and EQIP cost-share
- ◇ Participated in the MASCD Coloring Contest. Presented cash awards to the top three winners in each category
- ◇ Member of the St. Mary's County Natural Resources Class Professional Advisory Committee
- ◇ Held 12 staff meetings throughout the year
- ◇ Promote conservation tillage, soil health and nutrient management through the lease of the District owned no-till drills, manure spreaders, and turbo till
- ◇ Participated with the MDA Cover Crop Technical Advisory Committee
- ◇ Financial sponsor of the 11th season of the very successful Maryland Public Television Farm and Harvest Program
- ◇ Participated in the Forrest Career and Technology Center Natural Resources Class on two (2) field trips to remove invasives from the Church Point Living Shoreline
- ◇ Had a display booth at the St. Mary's County Fair, assisted 4H Program with judging natural resource projects
- ◇ Participated in the two (2) day Farm to School Program at two (2) elementary schools
- ◇ Held Envirothon Competition with 9 teams with 4 high schools competing. Great Mills High School was the county winner and participated at the Maryland Envirothon
- ◇ Participated at St. Mary's County STEAM Festival at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds
- ◇ Assisted Southern Maryland RC&D with annual easement monitoring within the Mattapanay Rural Legacy Area
- ◇ Participated in the St. Mary's County Commissioners recognition of Agriculture Week
- ◇ Supervisors attended the Southern Maryland Farm Tour with MDA Secretary Kevin Atticks
- ◇ Bruce Young gave a soils presentation to 2nd graders at the Chesapeake Public Charter School



2023 STEAM Festival



St. Mary's Soil Conservation District Coloring Contest

Congratulations to Our Local Winners

Class A (K – 1st Grades)

- 1st Place - Ellie Mose – Dynard Elementary
- 2nd Place - Shelby Spence – Duke Elementary
- 3rd Place - Isabella Gibson – Dynard Elementary

Class B (2nd-3rd Grades)

- 1st Place - Maliah Washington – Dynard Elementary
- 2nd Place - Caden Ednie – Kings Christian Academy
- 3rd Place - Jovi Drury – Kings Christian Academy

Class C (4th-5th Grades)

- 1st Place - Maggie Hayden – Dynard Elementary
- 2nd Place - Chase Grable – Banneker Elementary
- 3rd Place - Cecilia Hidalgo – St. Michaels School

Each year the St. Mary's Soil Conservation District sponsors a coloring contest for Kindergarten through fifth grade. The District awards cash prizes for first, second, and third place drawings in each of three classes. The pictures are judged on neatness, attention to detail, and how well directions are followed.

*Congratulations to all our winners!
We are happy to report that Ellie Mose also won
1st place at the state competition*



2023 Cooperator of the Year Sassafras Creek Farm - David & Jennifer Paulk



Sassafras Creek Farm is the 2023 Cooperator of the Year. The farm was established in 2011 by the husband-wife partnership of David and Jennifer Paulk. David is a veteran and a full-time second career farmer. Jennifer is a part-time farmer and is a U.S Navy Environmental Scientist. The farm is 83 acres of which 46 acres are in crop production. The Paulk's grow year round producing USDA Certified organic vegetables. They grow everything from arugula to zucchini but specialize in carrots and beets. Their sales are direct as members of the California Farmers Market and through local stores and restaurants in D.C. and Baltimore. Additional markets include the public schools system, food banks and to other Maryland farms. David reports that the business has steadily grown over the past 13 years and they enjoy a strong following of both local and regional customers.

As soon as the Paulk's assumed ownership of the farm in March 2011, they contacted the District to assist with the transition from a no-till cash crop farm to an organic vegetable farm. Through the development of their soil conservation and water quality plan, all of the crop land was placed in a three year cover crop rotation for soil quality improvement. Cover crops are used year round and include rye, tillage radishes, clover, winter and cow peas, soybeans and sudan. Additional conservation practices installed include six (6) high tunnels, pollinator habitat areas, wind-breaks and a 25kw solar panel system. Many of the listed conservation practices were cost shared through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive program (EQIP).

An organic vegetable farm requires a significant labor force. Much of the farm labor is a seasonal non-immigrant crew from Mexico who are sponsored under the Department of Labor's H2A work visa program. Farmer's Market and winter season labor is all local. Future plans include mentoring new farmers, taking care of their employees, increase marketing to support the farmers market, and to increase efficiency to reduce production costs. Improved production systems include underground irrigation lines and refrigerated transportation.

We congratulate David & Jennifer Paulk of Sassafras Creek Farm on being named the St. Mary's Soil Conservation District's 2023 Cooperators of the Year.



Pictured from left to right: Chairman Bobby Cooper, David Paulk, Jennifer Paulk, Board Members Carl Dyson, Stanley Boothe, Jeffrey Raley, Darrell Goode, and Associate Members Bonnie Browne and Gail Sivak



St. Mary's SCD and the Conservation Partnership Welcomes New Staff

Garrett Sterling, St. Mary's SCD's new Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist, was born and raised in St. Mary's County and graduated from University of Maryland with a plant science degree. While in school he worked a season with the Baltimore Orioles maintaining the field and practice facilities. After graduating from college, he and his wife moved to South Carolina for 6 years where he worked as an assistant golf course superintendent and then they moved to Georgia where he took a job as a head golf course superintendent for 3 years. Garrett and his wife decided it was time to have children and move back to St. Mary's County to be close to family. They have 2 young boys that are 3 and 6 and they are both wild enough to keep them busy. In the summer they enjoy being on the water whether its fishing or relaxing on a sandbar. Garrett spends most of his free time hanging out with family and he occasionally enjoys playing a round of golf when there is enough time to fit it into the busy family schedule.



Garrett Sterling with his dog, Bunker



Georgia Bowling

Hello, my name is Georgia Bowling and I am very excited to have started a position as an MDA Soil Conservation Associate working in the St. Mary Soil Conservation District. In this position, I use AutoCAD to design Best Management Practices that will benefit farmers and landowners with reducing soil erosion and runoff from getting into our beautiful state waters. I live in Charles County on my working family farm. I grew up being active in 4-H with showing and selling my sheep, growing fruit and vegetables, sewing clothes, and baking plenty of desserts. In 2018, I was the Miss Charles County Farm Bureau Ambassador which helped me realize my passion for science and agriculture. I graduated from University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in biology with a concentration in Agriculture. I want to help make the area I grew up in stay beautiful for future generations to enjoy. I hope to learn and grow in this position as much as possible to serve my community to the best of my ability. As my grandmother always said from Mother Teresa, "Do small things with great love."

Leah joined the District last August as a Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist. She was transplanted to St. Mary's County in 2005 and has since grown some deep roots, as well as a deep appreciation of country living. Her hobbies include hanging out with her family, classic cars, (one of her favorites is the 1970 Monte Carlo), cooking, and reading science fiction.



Leah
Langford



Chase Kolstrom
and his dog, Rye

My name is Chase Kolstrom and I am the new NRCS Forester for Southern Maryland. I was born and raised in Charles County, MD. After high school and one year at the College of Southern Maryland I transferred to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where I majored in Forestry and minored in wildlife and fisheries science. Before coming over to NRCS I held a position as a Forester with Maryland DNR in Charles County. I am very excited for this new career opportunity with NRCS and hope I can help many landowners within Southern Maryland carry out good woodland stewardship on their properties for years to come. In my personal time, I enjoy spending time with my dog and being outside doing activities such as hiking, camping, kayaking, and hunting.



Get up to
\$1,500
to Plant
Cover Crops
on Your Urban
or Small Scale
Farm!

Maryland's 2024 Small Acreage Cover Crop Program
Accepting Applications Through April 30, 2024

bit.ly/SmallFarmGrants

Email your application or send it through the mail by the **April 30, 2024** deadline. Questions? Please contact bill.tharpe@maryland.gov or 410-841-5869.

Applications are now being accepted for Maryland's 2024 Small Acreage Cover Crop Program. This financial assistance program is for urban and small-scale producers who do not qualify for traditional cover crop grants.

2024 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The maximum payment is **\$1,500** per grower, per year.
- This program is for growers who plant **less than ten (10) acres** of qualifying cover crops.
- You will be reimbursed based on paid receipts.
- Eligible species include single cereal grains or cover crop seed mixes.
- Plant your cover crop in open plots/fields, raised beds, or a high tunnel.



Scan with your
mobile device
to visit our website.

NRCS Update

By: Rachel Yeatman
District Conservationist



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Aerial view of Sassafras Creek Farm

2023 was a record year for us as we secured nearly \$400,000 in 10 new Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) & Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts to help farmers and landowners install BMPs on their land in St Mary's. Eight co-operators also installed 19 BMPs with the help of over \$122,000 from EQIP & CSP. Both EQIP and CSP are competitive, ranking based financial assistance programs and we have consistently been able to provide funding for designed ready to build projects over the last four years. Starting in 2023, through 2031, we will have even more statewide funding available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that will target certain BMPs that help with climate smart agriculture. This substantial investment will help us help you continue to install the Best Management Practices on your farmland.

Staffing has been a trying issue over the last few years, and unfortunately our NRCS planner position is still vacant in St Mary's, but I have high hopes that position will be filled before the end of June. In the meantime, I am happy to announce that we now have a regional Forester planner on board. This is a brand new position for the 5 Southern Maryland counties and I think we'll have plenty of work to keep him busy here. Chase Kolstrom is duty stationed in the Charles NRCS office and he will be working with forestry CSP plans and contracts in Southern Maryland. If you manage woodland that you would like to further improve the wildlife or production potential of then please contact the St Mary's office and we can see if CSP would be a good fit for you and your forest. Recent changes to the 5 year program increased the minimum annual payment from \$1500 to \$4000.

Thank you to all our cooperators for your continued investment of time, resources, and effort in getting conservation on your ground.



26737 Radio Station Way
Suite B
Leonardtown, MD 20650
Phone: 301-475-8402 ext 3

To:

Cover Crop Reminders

- Spring Kill Down must occur by June 3rd
- You can call in or email to report kill down

All NRCS, MDA, and SCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

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Cooperating Agencies, Supervisors, & Staff

STATE OF MARYLAND

Critical Area Commission
State Highway Administration
State Soil Conservation Committee
Department of Agriculture
Department of the Environment
Department of Natural Resources
University of Maryland Extension

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

Commissioners of St. Mary's County
Environmental Health
Board of Education
Metropolitan Commission
Dept. of Public Works & Transportation
Dept. of Land Use & Growth Management
Dept. of Recreation and Parks
Dept. of Economic Development

United States Government

Army Corps of Engineers
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Farm Service Agency

Others

Leonardtown Commissioners
Historic St. Mary's City Commission
MD Assoc. of Soil Conservation Districts
Nat'l Assoc. of Conservation Districts
Southern Maryland RC&D

St. Mary's SCD Board of Supervisors

Robert "Bobby" Cooper - Chairman
Stanley Boothe - Vice-chairman
Darrell Goode - Treasurer
Jeffrey Raley, Sr. - Member
Carl Dyson - Member
Ben Beale - Secretary
Bonnie Browne - Associate
Abigail Sivak - Associate

Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff

Rachel Yeatman - District Conservationist
Vacant - Soil Conservationist
Vacant - Soil Conservation Technician
Brian Brookhart - Civil Engineer
Valinda Clark - Program Support Specialist
Chase Kolstrom - Forester

St. Mary's Soil Conservation District Staff

Bruce Young - District Manager
Haley Carter - Program Manager
Karyn Hankins - Administrative Aide
Garrett Sterling - Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist

Maryland Department of Agriculture Staff

Tom Koviak - Ag Resource Conservation Spec.
Sara Lewis - Ag Resource Conservation Spec./Equine
Savannah Dobbins - Ag Resource Conservation Spec.
Leah Langford - Ag Resource Conservation Spec.
Luke Mudd - Engineering Technician
Nancy LaRochelle - Engineering Technician
Georgia Bowling - Soil Conservation Associate