



Cecil Soil Conservation District

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Board of Supervisor's Meeting September 17, 2025

The Cecil Soil Conservation District held a Board of Supervisors meeting with a Zoom call-in option. The meeting was called to order at 8:31 AM by Chairman – Bruce Yerkes. Attendees Supervisors – Van Funk, Willie Ewing, Vic Priapi, and Associate Member Alice Crothers. Other attendees: District Conservationist – Rob Weaver, District Manager - Chris Brown, MDA Area Coordinator - Darren Alles, Administrative Assistant – Patty Pierce, and District Coordinator – Tracey Rach. Visitors: MDA Agricultural Assessment Planner – Eddie Franceschi, Ray Fenstermacher, Octoraro Watershed Restoration Coordinator (Chester County), and Ryan Fisher representing Cecil Land Trust.

Darren Alles, MDA Area Coordinator – Annual review of District accounts are due October 1st. NRCS has a couple training events soon. Ag 101 training event is October 22nd – 23rd. Ivan Tokash will take the Ag 101 training. NRCS Bootcamp is December 2nd – 4th. Darren shared the list of MDA Cecil employees that will be attending. Darren also shared MDA employee reporting updates. District managers will now have accessibility to employee teleworking schedules and activities logs. Conservation Tracker Round 30 reconciliation deadline has ended. The new data system will be introduced on October 1st. Further details and a webinar will be held for training. Darren shared that new NRCS practice standards were added in new system as they will now count towards the bay model. Chris Brown asked if new practices like pipe drops could be added to the new system as upper shore and Southern Maryland have installed so many but this practice has not been added for WIP credits. Darren will follow-up. Conservation Grants are being reviewed for new policies and procedures. Cecil Cover Crop had 75 approvals with 24,151 acres, & amount \$1,368,912.00. Statewide cover crop is 1,274 approvals, 606,146.3 acres and \$35,767, 843.00 and set aside was \$22,500,000.00. MACS Annual status reviews are due in January. CSCD has received a few that will need to be completed. SSCC meeting is September 18th at MDA Headquarters. Maryland Ag Commission Ag Tour will be held on October 8th for a Cecil and Harford County, joint tour. Chris Brown shared details for the tour agenda. Darren shared with Harrison Palmer (the tour coordinator) conversation, issues and concerns to be discussed on the tour. Darren shared the process regarding AFO permits.

Eddie Franceschi was introduced as the new Agricultural Assessment Planner for MDA. Eddie has been an Agricultural Assessment planner for MDA since April 2025 and is getting settled into this position. He has worked many other years for MDA in many different departments. Eddie will primarily be looking at resource concerns and improvements. He looks at what data that is on file with district offices, follows ups on complaints, and helps with cover crop program. He can also help with manure transport program. Eddie has experience working with EQIP and CREP programs.

Ray Fenstermacher, Octoraro Watershed Restoration Coordinator introduced himself to the group. Ray was hired as part of the CWIP (Conowingo Watershed Implementation Plan) program that is being managed through Chester County SCD. Employed in Chester County but the watershed covers part of

Lancaster County and Cecil County. EPA is struggling how to manage disbursement of funds in the whole watershed. Currently focused on Chester County but has heard that the next wave of funding should include Lancaster County as well. Chesapeake Bay RAP Grant funding includes all of the Octoraro and Conowingo. Ray started in May. His background is geologist and spent most of his career in environmental and ground water remediation work. Looking forward to working with Octoraro Watershed.

Sonya Matlack, NRCS Planner introduced herself. Sonya is a new employee to the Cecil office and transferred from Anne Arundel and Calvert County. Sonya's background includes being a soil judge. Currently, she working on CREP plans.

- Van Funk made a motion to accept the August 20,2025 Board meeting minutes. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Van Funk asked if the board had reviewed the treasurer's report, and expenses. There were no questions. Vic Priapi made a motion to file the treasurer's report and pay bills. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried. Tracey shared the annual review information for this year. Van Funk and Tracey Rach discussed with the Board setting a cap with the accountant for the Annual Review required by MDA. This year's review was over double the allocated amount under the State General Fund. Tracey will research other accounting firms for better pricing. Tracey Rach shared with the Board that she submitted an application for the Land O Lakes grant for the 7th Grade Ag Education Days Event in 2026. This was a recommendation by our Associate Member, Alice Crothers. Tracey reported that it is in review and award letters will go out in November/December.

Old Business

- Chris Brown provided a recap of the Cecil County Ag Tour with the County Executive held on August 27th. He shared the tour route and details of each stop.
- Chris Brown shared that he was invited by Rachael Coffey to speak to her Introduction to Agriculture College Class at Cecil Community College on September 10th to give an overview of what the District does.
- Economic Development Harvest Dinner is September 24th at the Wellwood in Charlestown, MD. Attendees from the District will include, Chris Brown, Tracey Rach, Rob Weaver, Van Funk, Sean McCandless, John Gonzalez and Cherish Warner. Patty Pierce will also be attending on behalf of the district as well as Farm Bureau.
- On September 4th a few staff and Board Members from Harford Soil Conservation District came to Cecil to meet with Chris and Rob. Harford wanted to know how we handle ag fill, ag construction, and stormwater management. Staff shared our process and procedures with them. Tracey and Patty met with Donna Stanley who is Harford's Administrative Assistant to share work flow on some MACS programs.
- On October 8th the Maryland Ag Commission is organizing a joint Ag Tour with Harford and Cecil. Rob Weaver, Chris Brown, Tracey Rach, and Patty Pierce sat in on the planning meeting. Chris Brown has been assisting Harrison Palmer (MDA) with the tour sites in Cecil.

New Business

- Rob Weaver presented the District Activities Report. Staff visited farms for Inventory & Evaluations for various practices. Three projects were I&E'd. Three designs were reviewed "in-house". Four projects are in progress. Staff are currently conducting spot check site reviews received from MDA/MACS. Three claims were submitted to MDA. Rob Weaver shared NRCS financial assistance conservation program activities. NRCS will receive \$18,000,000.00 for EQIP for the state and \$6,000,000.00 for CSP for the state. There were no Farm Conservation Plans completed and annual goal / year to date acres information shared with the group for last month. Chris Brown and Rob Weaver are working with planners regarding better use of time and efficiency and meeting with cooperators through running producer reports. Planning seven or eight plans at one time. Thirty-one urban E&S plans were reviewed and twenty-two urban E&S plans were approved. One urban project review was discussed. Four 378- Small Pond plans were reviewed. Six urban meetings were attended. One agricultural stormwater management and erosion and sediment control meeting was attended. One stream restoration/wetland creation projects are in progress. Two information and education events were attended by staff. Staff attended five trainings and seven-monthly meetings. Chris Brown, Tracey Rach, Bruce Yerkes and Van Funk attended the MASCD summer meeting August 4th – August 6th. Two soil investigations were completed. Van Funk made a motion to accept the activities report as presented. Vic Priapi seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- District Project Tracking/Planning Report. One pond project has been held up. Rob Waever will contact the state engineer to ask status.
- Rob Weaver gave the NRCS updates. The NRCS state office is in their new office near MDA Headquarters in Annapolis. CT money was increased for over 100 positions to be funded in Maryland. Rog outlined the NRCS hiring freeze. This will affect most open positions except certain critical vacancies.
- Willie Ewing made a motion to accept Vernon Horst as a new cooperator. Vic Priapi seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- The next State Soil Conservation Committee meets tomorrow, September 18th at 9:00 am at MDA Headquarters in Annapolis. October meeting will be held in St. Mary's County and will continue moving around the state each month.
- Chris Brown reported that the Fair Hill Nature Center has been awarded a grant for their *Meaningful Watershed Education Experience*. Laura Hannan, Director, has reached out to Chris and staff to be a part of the planning committee. (Teach the Teachers for 5th grade students). Chris Brown and Tracey Rach will be attending a planning meeting on September 30th to begin partnering with Laura and her team. Night at the Nature Center is October 11th. Vic Priapi will attend the event.
- Harford County Banquet is October 23rd. Van Funk, Bruce Yerkes, Chris Brown, Tracey Rach, Rob Weaver, and Patty Pierce will attend.
- The Agri Business Development Coordinator Position through Cecil County Economic Development was discussed.

The next meeting will be held on October 22nd at 8:30 AM. The meeting will be held at the office with a teleconference option. The teleconference option will continue to be offered for those working in the field.

As there being no further general business, Bruce Yerkes called for a motion to adjourn the general meeting. Vic Priapi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Van Funk seconded the motion. The general meeting adjourned at 9:56 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia A Pierce
Administrative Assistant