



The Talbot Soil Conservation District

Summer 2010



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THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

What would be the feeling of this Nation should a foreign nation suddenly enter the United States and destroy 90,000 acres of land, as erosion has been allowed to do in a single county?

- Hugh Hammond Bennett
The Father of Soil Conservation

Steve Spielman, Soil Conservation Planner, and wife Melissa are proud to announce the arrival of their first child, Eva Michelle Spielman. She was born on June 8 weighing 7 lbs and 6 oz.

Congratulations Steve and Melissa!

**\$15 MILLION AVAILABLE IN COST-SHARE FUNDS TO MARYLAND FARMERS
COVER CROP SIGN-UP RUNS JUNE 21—JULY 15**

Governor Martin O'Malley has earmarked approximately \$15 million for Maryland's 2010-2011 Winter Cover Crop Program, which provides grants to farmers who plant cover crops this fall to conserve nutrients, reduce soil erosion and protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Enrollment for the statewide program takes place from June 21 through July 15, 2010 at soil conservation district offices.

"Maryland's Cover Crop Program is one strategy in an arsenal of tools we've employed to accelerate Bay restoration. They are among the most effective and efficient ways to cut down on storm water runoff from our farms," said Governor O'Malley. "Providing farmers with the investments they need to plant cover crops is crucial to the success of our ongoing Bay cleanup effort."

Farmers enrolled in the Maryland Cover Crop Program may plant traditional cover crops at a base rate of \$40/acre and receive up to \$55/acre in add-on incentive payments for using highly valued planting practices. Traditional cover crops may not be harvested, but can be grazed or chopped for livestock forage for on-farm use after becoming well established.

Farmers who choose to harvest their cover crops receive \$25/acre with a bonus payment of \$10/acre for planting rye. Farmers may fill out one application to enroll in both program options. This year, there are no enrollment caps for either program option.

"Again this year, farmers may choose from a list of cover crop contractors who can help them

meet planting deadlines during the busy harvest season. Farmers may wait until spring to decide which fields to retain for harvest," said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Earl F. Hance.

Cover crops are cereal grains and winter annual brassicas (plants in the cabbage family) that are planted to take up nutrients that remain in the soil following production of corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco or vegetables. Barley, canola, rapeseed, kale, rye, ryegrass, spring oats, triticale and wheat planted in the fall of 2010 are eligible. Special incentives are available to farmers who plant rye. Farmers may use seed they have saved. All seed used is required to meet Maryland Seed Law and Regulatory Standards and have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent.



MDA's 2010-2011 Cover Crop Program is administered by the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program and funded by the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund and the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. Applicants must be in good standing with MACS to participate and must be in compliance with the Nutrient Management Program. Farmers should visit their local soil conservation district office to enroll during the June 21 – July 15, 2010 enrollment period.

When fully implemented, the full suite of 2-Year Milestones will prevent an additional 3.75 million pounds of nitrogen and 201,000 pounds of phosphorus from reaching waterways by the end of 2011. Cover crops will account for 25 percent of this reduction.

Learn more at www.baystat.gov. For more information about the Cover Crop program, call the Talbot Soil Conservation District at 410-822-1577 x 3 or visit www.talbotscd.com.

NEW CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

HEYDSHA R. CORDERO-RODRIQUEZ, SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

CSP is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities and adopting new ones on their operations. This program is available nationwide and has a Continuous Sign-Up with periodic cut-offs for ranking. The next cut-off date is June 25, 2010.

Applications will be evaluated and ranked relative to other applications that address similar resource concerns and focuses on those identified as a priority for Maryland. The 5 resource concerns identified by Maryland are: *Air Quality, Soil Erosion, Soil Quality, Water Quality and Water Quantity.*



Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie, improved pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial private forest. A new land use added is "pasture-cropland" where prime farmland is used as pasture. Eligible applicants may include individual landowners and legal entities. Landowners interested in applying for woodland management practices should first contact their local Forester for a Forest Stewardship Plan before submitting their forestland application with us.

The program has 2 types of payments for performance.

- An annual payment for installing new additional conservation activities and maintaining existing activities
- A supplemental payment that is available for a participant receiving annual payment who also adopts a resource-conserving crop rotation.

The payment rate for supplemental payment is \$12.00 per acre. NRCS will make payments after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract

activities installed and maintained in the previous year. CSP payments for joint operations contracts increased to an annual limit of \$80,000/FY and \$400,000 for over 5 year contract. Payments of individuals will not exceed \$40,000 in any year or \$200,000 for contracts entered into during any 5-year period. Participants who are limited resource farmers, beginning farmer, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher may receive minimum payment of \$1,000 if the contract amount in any given year is less than that amount.

To apply for the newly revamped CSP, potential applicants will be encouraged to use a Self-Screening Checklist to determine whether the new program is suitable for them or their operation. It is available on the NRCS Website and at NRCS field offices. After self-screening, the producer's current and proposed conservation practices are entered in the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT), which inventory resources to estimate existing conservation performance level, schedule new conservation activities and estimate conservation performance improvement, determine land treatment eligibility and ranking score and establish annual payment. Based on the ranking, the application is pre-approved and an on-site field verification is conducted to check if resources inventory information was accurate prior to contract approval.

Applicants must meet the following CSP requirements:

- Be the operator of record in the USDA/ FSA farm records management system (Owners can be participants) for the eligible land being offered for enrollment
- Have control of the land for the term of the contract
- Be in compliance with Highly Erodible



Land and Wetland Conservation Provisions - Not exceed the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitations set by Congress and include the eligible land in their entire agricultural or forestry operation.

New Enhancements added to CSP are:

- *Forest Wildlife Structures
- *Stocking Forages to extend the Grazing Season
- *Managing Calving to coincide with forage availability
- *Conifer Crop Tree Release
- *Patch Harvesting to improve degraded hardwood stands
- *Forest Stand improvement for soil quality
- *On farm Composting of Organic Waste
- *Protecting of Sensitive Areas on Winter Grazing a land.

For more information or interested to apply for the new CSP please visit Easton NRCS Field office or contact us at (410) 822-1577 x 3 or the NRCS web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

THE TALBOT SCD WELCOMES CHRISTY BROWN, NRCS CNMP PLANNER

Prior to coming to NRCS, Christy was the Coordinator and Nutrient Management Advisor for the University of Maryland's Agriculture Nutrient Management Program. Christy was formerly with NRCS as a Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) participant in Delaware. She will be developing Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) for Talbot, Caroline and Dorchester farmers.

Christy can be reached at christy.brown@md.usda.gov or 410-822-1577 ext. 105.

75 YEARS—A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

TERESA KAMPMEYER, NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (formally the Soil Conservation Service). The Soil Conservation Service changed its name in 1994 to more accurately reflect its role in protecting all natural resources: soil, water, plants, air and animals.

It was in 1935 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to help combat the dust storms ripping across the southern plains the previous two years. With the understanding that these storms posed a national threat, Congress established the Soil Conservation Service to combat soil erosion and to preserve our natural resources.

I can only imagine what it must have been like in the early 1930's when homesteading and early farming practices cleared the land and all that soil was worked up to plant crops. Then the lack of rain dried up all the crops that was planted opening up the country side to high winds whipping up an estimated 350 million tons of soil into the sky. People couldn't leave their homes, animals and livestock suffocated on the plains.

Thank goodness for Hugh Hammond Bennett.

He led the soil conservation movement in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, urged the nation to address the "national menace" of soil erosion that occurred during the Dust Bowl, and helped to create the Soil Conservation Service. Hugh Hammond Bennett served as its first chief and is still considered today to be the father of soil conservation.

His efforts led to demonstration projects and ultimately to a conservation partnership that the nation enjoys today of science-based technical assistance and support

from USDA, leadership from local conservation districts, and support from state conservation agencies for natural resource conservation on private land.

We have a great partnership here in Maryland. We all love our land and care about protecting our natural resources. I believe Maryland farmers are going to be successful in their efforts to show they are doing a good job of being good stewards of the land. They care about the land, having a healthy environment, clean air & water, and abundant wildlife. We see this everyday working in the local Soil Conservation District Offices.

I am glad to be a part of this strong conservation effort and the partnership we have in Maryland.

For more information visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/bennett.html



HUGH HAMMOND
BENNETT
April 15, 1881 —
July 7, 1960

CREP WORKS WONDERS FOR WETLANDS, WILDLIFE AND WATER QUALITY

STEVE STRANO, NRCS STATE BIOLOGIST

Wetlands, our vital link between land and water, are one of America's disappearing treasures. Considered among the most productive ecosystems in the world, wetlands provide critical habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, fish and mammals. Because of their high productivity, wetlands can support rich and varied plant and animal life. Wetlands also play an important role in filtering nutrients and sediments from waterways and controlling flooding and erosion.

In years past, however, wetlands were seen as unimportant and even unpleasant sources of mosquitoes, flies and odors. It is estimated that within the past 400 years, more than 50 percent of the wetlands in the lower 48 states were destroyed or converted to other uses. But over the past few decades we have learned a lot about wetlands. We now recognize their value as unique and productive ecosystems and many efforts are under way to protect and restore them. One of best opportunities for restoring wetlands is through participation in Maryland's

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Many Maryland landowners and farmers own marginally productive lands that can be returned to thriving, functioning wetlands with the help of CREP. Participating landowners receive a one-time sign-up bonus of \$200 an acre plus attractive annual rental payments for up to 15 years in return for creating wetlands on their property. Most farmers will find the new formula for determining the annual CREP land rental payment quite attractive. New this year, landowners receive the local soil rental rate (SRR) plus an additional incentive payment that ranges from 100 percent

to 200 percent of the local SRR, depending on the type of wetland installed.

Financial help to cover the costs of creating wetlands is also available. Maryland CREP pays landowners up to 87.5 percent of the cost of creating wetlands plus an additional practice incentive bonus payment worth 40 percent of the total installation cost. Free technical assistance to help design and install the wetland is provided by local soil conservation districts.

If you are a farmer or landowner who is interested in these or other CREP options, visit the Talbot Soil Conservation District. Sign-up for Maryland CREP is ongoing and continues until acreage goals are met.





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DON'T FORGET! - The Talbot County Fair is July 7th-10th

For more information visit www.talbotcountyfair.org

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