



TALBOT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER

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NRCS Maryland Announces AMA and EQIP Signup for 2020 Funding

Farmers and forest landowners will want to plan ahead and sign up early for USDA conservation funding. Terron Hillsman, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist in Maryland, announced farmers and forest landowners interested in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [need to apply by March 20, 2020](#), for funding in 2020. Applications are being taken at all USDA Service Centers in Maryland.

Applications for the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program must also be received by March 20, 2020 to receive funding consideration in 2020.

EQIP is the primary program available to farmers and landowners for farm and woodland conservation work, offering payments for over 110 basic conservation practices. Last year, Maryland received nearly \$13 million in funds for EQIP practices. AMA is a smaller program that focuses on high tunnels and water management systems.

"The new Farm Bill allow NRCS to support conservation that ensures cost-effective financial assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality, and other natural resources benefits. Through EQIP, for example, the funding cap was raised for organic producers, there are new enrollment options through incentive contracts, an advance payment option is available for historically underserved producers, and much more," said Hillsman. *"By getting EQIP applications in early, NRCS staff will have time to visit individual farms and assist in planning conservation practice needs."*

All eligible applications received by March 20, 2020, will be evaluated, prioritized and ranked for funding in 2020. Farmers may contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning.

Landowners interested in applying for program funding should contact the Talbot Soil Conservation District. State-specific program information is available on the NRCS Maryland website at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov.



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Conservation District"
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Reminders about Cover Crop Spring Certification

- **Delayed termination incentive**
– Operators must notify the District by **April 15th, 2020** which acres they intend to declare for this incentive.
- Within two weeks after termination of cover crop, the operator is required to certify with the District, **but no later than June 3, 2020**.
- *Operator must have submitted Nutrient Management Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for the previous year **before Spring Certification***



Funding Available for Conservation Partnership Projects Across Maryland: Applications due by March 20, 2020

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is encouraging farmers and forest landowners to submit applications for current Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) projects available in Maryland.

Farmers and forestland owners may apply for conservation funding at any time throughout the year, but funding selections are made at specific times and the **2020 sign-up deadline for RCP projects is March 20, 2020.**

Maryland currently offers RCP in selected areas across the state through eight projects that range in focus, from animal waste management practices, to stream-side buffers, to wildlife habitat restoration. The following projects currently have funding available:

- **Accelerating Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans:** Offered in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, this project addresses animal waste management concerns in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and helps farmers implement practices to avoid winter application of manure. Producers that are interested in waste storage facilities, pumping plants, heavy use areas, and solid/liquid waste separation facilities are encouraged to apply.
- **Delmarva Whole System Conservation Partnership- Field to Stream:** Offered in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Delaware Maryland Agribusiness Association, this project will increase the implementation of advanced nutrient management practices and restoration of wetlands to reduce excess nutrients to the Chesapeake Bay. The project will also use science-based targeting of these practices to increase their effectiveness. Private landowners located in the Blackwater, Choptank, Nanticoke, Pocomoke and Wicomico watersheds that are interested in advanced nutrient management and wetland easements and restoration are encouraged to apply.
- **Engaging Small AFO's in the Nutrient Management Process:** This project seeks to reduce nutrient and sediment loss associated with small dairy AFOs by encouraging the development and implementation of CNMPs. It is available state-wide to small dairy operations interested in developing comprehensive nutrient management plans and implementing plan practices, including: waste storage structures, animal mortality facilities, heavy use areas, barnyard runoff practices, animal exclusion practices, and enhanced nutrient management (such as manure injection), among others.
- **Meeting WIP Goals in the Chesapeake Bay:** Offered in cooperation with the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, this project seeks to accelerate the installation of best management practices to enable Maryland farmers to meet the nutrient and sediment water quality goals set forth in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. It is available to producers in Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Talbot, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester, Washington, Frederick, Howard and Montgomery counties who are interested in animal waste storage, stream fencing, heavy use areas, liquid separation technology, and advanced nutrient management practices.
- **Taking Soil Health in Maryland to the Next Level:** This project supports conservation practices that enhance soil health and improve both air quality through increased carbon sequestration and water quality through increased efficiency of nutrient use and water management. Conservation practices include adaptive nutrient management, cover crops, crop rotations, variable rate technology, residual and tillage management crop rotations, precision farming, edge of field tools, composting, forest and biomass planting and other practices supportive of soil health.
- **Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation:** The Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation project supports a diverse three-state partnership to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices. Financial and technical assistance will be focused where practices will have the greatest impact on Chesapeake Bay water quality; farmers have demonstrated enthusiasm for these practices; partner outreach and education and technical assistance efforts support financial assistance delivery; and prime farmland is located.

Landowners interested in applying for program funding should contact the Talbot Soil Conservation District. State-specific program information is available on the NRCS Maryland website at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov.

What is a Soil Conservation & Water Quality Plan and why should I have one for my farm?

Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQP) or **Conservation Plans** are a valuable tool for farmers and landowners to manage resources and improve profitability.

A conservation plan is a working document designed to fit each individual farmer's needs while protecting and conserving their soil and water resources.

A conservation plan folder contains:

- Aerial photo of the farm which includes property boundaries, topography, current and proposed BMPs, and possibly other resource items;
- A written record of the landowners decisions regarding cropping sequences, residue management, and nutrient management, with a plan for implementation and;
- A map showing soil types and boundaries along with descriptions and capability classes showing suitability for cropland, forestland, and wildlife habitat.

Conservation plans are not mandatory unless all or part of the farm falls within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, or you are applying for or currently participate in an agricultural land preservation program, or participate in any state or federal cost share programs.

If you are interested in developing a conservation plan for your farm, please contact one of the conservation planners to set up an on-farm visit. The planner will need to walk the farm and take notes on current farming practices and identify any resource issues which may need to be addressed. These plans are free and should be updated at least every 10 years.

If you are unsure if your plan is current or would like to schedule a farm visit, please contact one of our planners:

- ⇒ Steve Spielman, steve.spielman@maryland.gov - 443-746-4312
- ⇒ Levin Schwaninger, levin.schwaninger@maryland.gov - 443-746-4315
- ⇒ Scott Nordhoff, scott.nordhoff@nacdn.net - 443-746-4318
- ⇒ Rocky Donovan, rocky.donovan@maryland.gov - 443-746-4303



Recently completed grassed waterway

About Our Staff

Rocky Donovan

Ag. Resource Conservation Specialist

Rocky joined the Talbot SCD in late 2019. He was recently a grant conservation planner with the Kent Soil & Water Conservation District, a position he held for a little over three years. He grew up on the eastern shore and after graduating from Kent County High School, he received his bachelor's degree from Salisbury University in 2012. Rocky's degree is in Environmental Studies with Biology as his minor. He looks forward to working with the agricultural community in Talbot County.

Laura Eddy

Soil Conservationist

Laura Eddy, Talbot County's new Soil Conservationist, started working with NRCS in 2016 as a contractor at the State Office. She is originally from Howard County, but has recently moved to the Eastern Shore. She received her bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management from University of Maryland, and received her master of Natural Resources degree from Oregon State University. She also has a graduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems from University of Maryland and a graduate certificate in Water Conflict Management from Oregon State University. For her outstanding role in supporting conservation efforts throughout Maryland, Laura is the 2019 recipient of Western Maryland RC&D's "G. Paul Edwards Conservation Award". Laura is eager to utilize her technical skills to assist farmers with managing the natural resources on their property.

John (Jack) L. King Jr.

District Conservationist

Jack is a long term employee with NRCS and as District Conservationist he supervises the NRCS staffs in both Caroline and Talbot Counties. Jack's responsibility also includes overseeing the conservation activities of the entire district ensuring all conservation practices are installed to meet the standards set by NRCS. Jack brings a background of 35 years of farming, producing milk and breed stock in the Holstein Breed and Red and White Dairy Cattle Association. Upon graduation from high school Jack attended the University of Maryland earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Science. Later in life he attended Salisbury University working on a Masters Degree in Social Science. Jack's interest lay in promoting 4H for youth and serves on the Board of the Maryland 4H Foundation.

Kayla Meredith

Soil Conservation Associate

Kayla graduated from Colonel Richardson High School in 2015 and then received her associate degree in Applied Science / Agribusiness from Delaware Tech Community College in 2018. She began her career with the Dorchester Soil Conservation District as grant soil conservation planner in 2017. In early 2019 she accepted a position as soil conservation associate with the Talbot SCD. She is excited to be working in her new "home" county and is ready to help offer technical assistance to landowners.

D. Scott Nordhoff

Ag. Resource Conservation Specialist

Scott Nordhoff started working at the Talbot SCD in October 2008. Born in Philadelphia, PA he grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana, and moved to Denton in 2002. He received a bachelor's degree in Interior / Environmental Architecture from Ball State University in 1988. He has experience at several large and midsize design and engineering firms. He is an NRCS certified conservation planner and holds a Nutrient Management Certificate. Scott uses his technical skills to assist farmers and landowners with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and conservation plan development.

Kim Reynolds

Program Support Specialist

Kimberly Reynolds, recently joined the Talbot SCD staff as the Program Support Specialist for Caroline and Talbot Counties. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Communications from Towson University. A native of Talbot County, Kimberly returned to Easton and began working for a local title company. She handled loan closings and real estate transactions, working with wide variety of clients on the Eastern Shore. She later chose to shift career paths, working with individuals with special needs to obtain service funding available through federal, state and non-profit programs. Kimberly looks forward to assisting farmers with completing the steps necessary to access resources available through NRCS programs.

Shawn D. Smith

District Manager

Following an internship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in high school, Shawn earned his bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Sciences from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2006. While in college he studied soil morphology & genesis with the thought of becoming a professional soil scientist. Upon graduation he began working for the Talbot SCD as a grant conservation planner, where in 2008 he accepted a state position with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). In 2015, Shawn was selected as

MDA's *Employee of the Year*. He held a planner position for over 12 years and has just recently been promoted to District Manager. The district manager is tasked to supervise state and district employees and to carry out the policies and priorities of the Talbot SCD Board of Supervisors. Shawn is married with three kids and resides in Trappe.

Steve Spielman
Ag. Resource Conservation Specialist

Steve Spielman is a Conservation Planner with Maryland Dept. of Agriculture and has been assigned to the Talbot Soil Conservation District since 1987. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Conservation and Resource Development from the University of Maryland. He is certified as a Nutrient Management Consultant with Maryland Dept. of Agriculture and a Certified Conservation Planner with NRCS. He says, "There is no greater satisfaction in this field than assisting with the implementation of conservation practices to solve resource problems." He resides in Easton with his wife and daughter.

Levin H. Schwaninger Jr.
Ag. Resource Conservation Specialist

After a 25 year career as a dairy farmer ended in June 1998, Levin accepted a position as a County Technician at the Dorchester Soil Conservation District. He held that position until December 15, 1999 when he accepted a position with the Maryland Dept. of Agriculture as a Soil Conservation Technician in Dorchester. Three weeks into January 2000 he applied and received a Soil Conservation Planner position at the Talbot Soil Conservation District and continues to serve in this capacity.

Levin and his wife live in Trappe.

L. Dale Willson
Secretary

Dale started her career as a clerk typist when she was 25 years old with the Maryland Department of Agriculture. She has spent her entire career working out of the Talbot SCD office in Easton. Dale has traveled daily from northern Queen Anne's County to Easton for the past 35 years. Throughout her career she has advanced to several position, currently the Districts secretary. She has worked with three District Managers and four District Conservationists. Dale currently lives in her hometown of Crumpton.

Brandon R. Zinter
Soil Conservation Associate

Brandon Zinter graduated from Easton High School in 2001 studying Earth Sciences, Ag Sciences, Biology, & Environmental Sciences. After high school he attended Chesapeake College where he studied drafting, business, and chemistry. Brandon joined the Talbot SCD in late 2018 and has already been involved in several conservation projects throughout the county. He primarily provides technical services such as surveying, design, and construction supervision of conservation practices. Other duties include working with landowners to secure cost-share funding for federal and state programs. Brandon is excited about his opportunity with the SCD and looks forward to working with landowners and farmers to install successful projects on their land.

2020 Land Poster Contest

Local schools throughout Talbot County are invited to participate in the 30th Anniversary Land Poster Contest presented by the National Association of Conservation Districts. This years theme is "**Where would we BEE without pollinators?**"



Participating schools will set up their own panel of judges for entries in the respective age groups. Each school will judge a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner in each age group. The school judging should take place before April 22, 2020. 1st place winners in each age group will be entered in the County-wide contest.

Posters can be created during the month of March and April and up until school judging. Winning posters must be submitted to the Talbot SCD for county-wide judging on April 22, 2020 which coincides with the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day!

1st place winners of the county-wide contest will be entered in the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation District's Poster Contest held in July 2020. If entries are winners at the State contest they will be entered in the National Association of Conservation District's Poster Contest held in January/February 2021.

For more information or to view previous winners, visit our website at <http://www.talbotscd.com/>.



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CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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