



TALBOT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING **66** YEARS OF CONSERVATION
1958-2023

March 2024

Volume 24, Issue 2

WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)?

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as:

- Improved water and air quality;
- Conserved ground and surface water;
- Increased soil health;
- Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation;
- Improved or created wildlife habitat; and
- Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.

With support from the Talbot Soil Conservation District, NRCS is able to work one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. Producers



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IMPORTANT DATES

April Board Meeting Apr 10 @ 7:30 PM

May Board Meeting May 8 @ 7:30 PM

Memorial Day (5/27) - Office Closed

June Board Meeting ... June 12 @ 7:30 PM

Maryland Envirothon.... June 12-13

To keep up with our all of our local conservation efforts, follow us on social media channels:



Like us on Facebook "**Talbot Soil Conservation District**"



Follow us on X at **@talbotscd**



Follow us on Instagram at **@talbotscd**



Follow us on YouTube at **@talbotsoilconservationdist1059**



*MDA Secretary Kevin Atticks, Rocky Donovan, Ray Geist,
MDA Deputy Secretary Steve Connelly*

MDA EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER AWARDS



On Wednesday, March 13, the Maryland Department of Agriculture recognized Employees of the Quarter for October—December 2023.

The Talbot Soil Conservation District was well represented as Rocky Donovan was selected as Employee of the Quarter for Customer Service and Ray Geist was selected as Employee of the Quarter for Outstanding Performance. **Congratulations!**

2024 NACD FLY-IN ADVOCACY DAY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington D.C.—On March 20, 2024, several partners from Maryland participated in the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) annual Fly-In, where members visited Washington D.C. and met with legislators to discuss policies that affect conservation and farmers from across the country.

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation District's (MASCD) president and Talbot Soil Conservation District Chairman John Swaine III, along with Shawn Smith, Talbot SCD Manager, Suzy Daubert, NRCS State Conservationist, Jen Nelson, MASCD Executive Director and Rudy Arredondo, President of the National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, met with several legislators and aids on the hill to discuss important conservation priorities.

Legislators were given informational packets that included the following:

The Role of the Conservation Districts

Conservation districts work with farmers and landowners to develop and implement conservation projects that are tailor-made for their individual operations. Each county in Maryland has a conservation district that works closely with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Maryland Department of Agriculture and other partners to provide technical and financial assistance to our cooperators and get projects on the ground.

In 2023, Maryland's Conservation Partners leveraged \$28.62 million in federal conservation funds with \$35.6 million in state funds to adopt conservation practices, including:

- 395,000 acres of cover crops to improve soil health and prevent nutrients from entering our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay
- 1,246 Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans to protect 126,293 acres
- 2,196 best management practices, such as animal waste management systems and riparian and grass buffers



Grant greater flexibility and authority to state and local partners to execute technical assistance agreements and leasing agreements that are the best fit for their locality and allow partners to remain co-located.

- Remove language in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program related to unfunded liabilities that prohibits states from partnering with the program. In addition, the same state-level authority noted above would streamline the process for landowners and encourage greater participation in the program.
- Keep flood prevention and drainage infrastructure front of mind as critical issues for East Coast states to be resilient to climate change impacts.



L to R: Shawn Smith, Suzy Daubert, John Swaine III, Jen Nelson and Rudy Arredondo.

How Our Elected Officials Can Help

Thank you for passing a spending bill that funds USDA and puts an end to continuing resolutions that created uncertainty for conservation operations.

- Pass a bipartisan Farm Bill in 2024 so that our farmers have confidence in making plans that keep their operations profitable and productive.
- Keep conservation investments through the Inflation Reduction Act in the conservation sections of the Farm Bill.
- Avoid one-size-fits-all



Jen Nelson and John Swaine III leading one of the many discussions with elected officials in D.C.



EASTON FFA "TAKE YOUR TRACTOR TO SCHOOL DAY"



March 15, 2024—

Many thanks to our NRCS, MDA and Talbot SCD staff who attended the 2024 Easton #FFA Drive Your Tractor To School Day at Easton High School. Staff discussed the many career opportunities within conservation that support agricultural farming operations and shared their FFA experience with several students.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

From Page 1, "What is EQIP?"

implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. EQIP helps producers make conservation work for them. Financial assistance for practices may be available through EQIP. Some producers may also qualify for advance payment.



NRCS offers technical assistance at no cost. Producers can use our personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to make informed decisions about their land. Technical Service Providers (TSP) can also help producers plan, design and implement conservation practices or develop conservation activity plans to improve their agricultural operations.

The first step is to contact the Talbot Soil Conservation District. An NRCS certified conservation planner will schedule a visit to your property. They will walk the land with you to discuss your goals and review any resource concerns. Following the site visit, the conservation planner will develop a conservation plan that includes a variety of conservation practices or activities to address the resource concerns and management goals discussed.

For more information about EQIP, contact our Becky Brown at rebecca.brown@usda.gov. Article modified from NRCS website, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives>.

2024 NACD Poster Contest Theme— May the Forest Be With You Always



For 33 years the Talbot Soil Conservation District has sponsored the Land Stewardship Poster Contest. Each year Talbot SCD provides poster board and a theme to public and private schools in Talbot County. The 2024 theme is *“May the Forest Be With You Always.”*

For the County Wide Land Stewardship Poster Contest, each school sets up a panel of judges and provides 1st place winning posters in five age groups (grades K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12) to the Talbot SCD for County wide judging that coincides with Earth Day Celebrations. 1st place winners receive a \$50 gift card, 2nd and 3rd place winners receive \$25 gift cards. All winning artwork can be found at <http://www.talbotscd.com/poster-contest>.



Farmers can now work with the Districts to certify their operation as **“Bay Friendly”** and receive recognition on MASCD’s website, bayfriendlyfarms.com, and with a sign for their farm headquarters. To learn more about the program, visit bayfriendlyfarms.com, or stop in to the Talbot Soil Conservation District.

Agricultural SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY for High School & College Students



The Talbot SCD Board of Supervisors is pleased to be once again offering the **Roy R. Scott Memorial Scholarship**. This scholarship is for deserving students who are pursuing a career focused on agricultural or civil engineering, or an agricultural related program specifically addressing natural resources and/or conservation. Academic achievement and participation in extra/intra

curricular activities warrant consideration.

A scholarship of up to \$1,000.00 may be awarded each year. Applicants must be a resident of Talbot County and have a high school or college GPA of 3.0 or better.

Deadline for application is April 26, 2024. Applications can be found at <http://www.talbotscd.com/scholarship-program/>. Submit completed applications to Shawn Smith, shawn.smith@maryland.gov.



*2023 award recipient, Jadon Cook with
Chairman John Swaine III*

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.

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 our 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.



CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

Rock lined outlets (NRCS code 468) are used to accomplish one or more of the following purposes: **provide safe conveyance of runoff** from conservation practices or other flow concentrations without causing erosion or flooding, **prevent or stabilize existing gully erosion** or scour, or to **protect and improve water quality**

If you have an erosive area in the field contact one of our planners at 410-822-1577 x 3. More photos can be found on our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/talbotscd>.



TALBOT SCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Talbot SCD Board of Supervisors provides overall supervision and sets policy assuring that the district performs tasks required by law and memorandums of understanding. Supervisors are appointed to represent farming, forestry, wildlife, suburban/urban interests, and other natural resource interests in a district.

Our Board also consists of associates. Associates are nonvoting, volunteer members who actively contribute to developing and implementing the district's programs.

Supervisors

- John Swaine III, *Chairman (County Appointee)*
- Colin Jones, *Vice Chairman (Farm Bureau)*
- Kyle Hutchison, *Treasurer (At-large)*
- Hannah Harrison, *Member (UMD Extension)*
- Vacant, *Member (At-large)*
- Shannon Dill (Extension Service), *Secretary*
- Billy Foster, *Associate*
- Raymond Harrison III, *Associate*
- Gavin Roe, *Associate*
- Norman Fike, *Honorary Member*



TALBOT SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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STAY CONNECTED

Website <http://www.talbotscd.com/>

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TALBOT SCD FIELD STAFF

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