

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



2023 CATOCTIN & FREDERICK DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) **Manure Injection and Transport** programs provided **\$205,506.35** in assistance to help district cooperators inject **2,442 acres** with manure and transport **2,815 tons** of manure from fields with high phosphorus to fields where phosphorus was needed.
- **The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS)** Program provided **\$1,260,231.40** in cost share assistance to cooperators in the Catoctin and Frederick Districts to assist with the installation of various best management practices.
- Frederick County Farmers enrolled **71,981 acres** in MDA's Cover Crop program which provided **\$1,157,718.00** in assistance to help offset the cost of purchasing seed and planting small grains that provide winter cover but are not harvested.
- Frederick County cooperators received nearly **\$2,841,857.09** in payments for completed contracts through NRCS programs including: **EQIP, AMA, RCPP, and CSP**.
- With both state and federal funds we installed **367 BMPs**.
- Planners wrote conservation plans covering **9,942.10 acres** in the Catoctin and Frederick Districts.
- The Frederick District awarded the 2023 George A. Nicholson, Sr. Memorial Scholarships to: Mikayla Linkous, Megan Downing, and Abigail Beckman.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (BMP) IMPLEMENTED IN
THE CATOCTIN & FREDERICK DISTRICTS:

Qty:	BMP:
9	Waste Storage Structures
7.4 acres	Grassed Waterways
11	Roof Runoff Structures
18,498 ft.	Streamside Fencing

Qty:	BMP:
51	Watering Facilities
32 Acres	Prescribed Grazing
47.8 Acres	Riparian Forest Buffer

SEDIMENT AND EROSION CONTROL IN THE CATOCTIN & FREDERICK DISTRICTS:

Qty:	Type:
712	Sediment & Erosion Control Plans Reviewed
2756.61	Approved Sediment Control Acres
34	Forest Harvest Permits

Qty:	Type:
527	Grading Permits
52	Pre-Construction Meetings
418	Site Inspections

DIGGING DEEPER INTO SOIL HEALTH WITH JIM HOORMAN



On February 7th our Districts, in cooperation with Frederick County Farm Bureau and the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, held “Digging Deeper into Soil Health” at the Great Frederick Fair Grounds Null Building. Our keynote speaker was Jim Hoorman of Hoorman Health Services. Mr. Hoorman is currently a private industry consultant on soil health who has been a National No-Till Convention Speaker, was a former national Soil Health Specialist with NRCS, and also was a former Ohio State University Extension Agent.

The days talk was tailored to Maryland soils, climate, and agricultural practices. Topics included slugs, the nitty gritty of soil structure and composition, micronutrients and humates for plant health, and the importance of soil ecology and nutrient cycling. Local ag sales companies along with government agencies were set up and able to answer questions as well. We look forward to hosting another event like this in the future!



SOIL SMART FARM TOUR

On September 8th local and state legislators, County Executive Jessica Fitzwater, and many others joined the SCD, Frederick County Farm Bureau, and Horizon Farm Credit to tour four farms that represent the agricultural diversity throughout Frederick County. This is the third year the tour was offered. The tour started in Middletown with a stop at Chis and Jamie Derr’s Valley-Ho Farm, where Jamie spoke about her cut flower operation and ways they have diversified their farming operation. The group then headed to Knoxville to meet the Pry Family of Needwood Farm. Here participants learned about a heavy use area and manure storage best management practice as well as prescribed grazing. They Pry’s also discussed the Frederick County Economic Development Office’s Ag Innovation Grant which helped them to purchase a walk-in freezer that allowed them to expand their freezer beef sales to the public. Calico Land LLC was the next stop on the tour. The Sweeney family, like other farms on the tour, have installed best management practices that include two covered heavy-use areas, stream fencing, crossings and riparian buffers. The final stop of the tour took the group to Mayne’s Tree Farm in Buckeystown. Merle Mayne spoke about his experience with agri-tourism and the challenges and opportunities he has faced. It was a great day spent discussing local agriculture and we look forward to next years tour.



SABILLASVILLE ENVIROMENTAL SCHOOL— HARVEST DAY

In October some of the District staff attended Harvest Day at the Sabillasville Environmental School (SES). SES provides elementary and middle school aged children in Frederick County a classroom curriculum with a focus on agriculture and environmental science.

Here you can see students watching Mark Freese, one of our technicians, use a rainfall simulator. The rainfall simulator demonstrates the effects of cover crops and how much water runs off of the soil verses how much infiltrates the soil by taking samples with a cover crop planted vs. without.



FREDERICK COUNTY ENVIROTHON—

The Frederick County Envirothon was held on April 25, 2023 at Cunningham Falls State Park. 16 teams from Frederick County Public Schools completed to test their knowledge. Each team is tested on their knowledge in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a fifth issue that changes each year. This year, the fifth issue was adapting to climate change. Please join us in congratulating the following top three teams:

- 1st Place: “Rose Mallow” from Urbana High School
- 2nd Place: “Blue Herons” from Brunswick High School
- 3rd Place: “Picasso Moths” from Urbana High School

The first place team, “Rose Mallow” from Urbana High School, went on to compete at the 2023 Maryland Envirothon at the Western 4H Park in Garrett County, held in June, and placed 6th overall.



First Place Team- “Rose Mallow” from Urbana High School



Students evaluating soils.

2023 CATOCTIN COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR—RICHVALE FARM, THE AHALT FAMILY



Please join us in congratulating the 2023 Cooperator of the Year– The Ahalt Family of Richvale Farm. As stewards of the land in Middletown for six generations, the Ahalt Family has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation. Richvale Farm's multi-generational approach to farming encompasses a diverse range of practices aimed at preserving and enhancing the natural resources upon which their operation depends. Their dedication to implementing cutting-edge conservation techniques sets them apart as exemplary leaders in the agricultural community.

The Ahalt Family's farming operation utilizes no-till practices and the planting of cover crops each fall. By minimizing soil disturbance and keeping the ground covered year-round, they have significantly reduced erosion, preserved soil health, and enhanced water quality in the surrounding area. Their installation of grass waterways, stream fencing,

and crossings prevents sediment runoff. Additionally, their implementation of prescribed grazing practices ensures that livestock are managed in a manner that maintains healthy pastures and minimizes environmental impact.

By investing in manure storage facilities, the Ahalt Family can carefully time nutrient applications to optimize crop growth while minimizing the risk of nutrient runoff and groundwater contamination. Their construction of roofed heavy use areas exemplifies their proactive approach to protecting pastures and soil health during inclement weather, further demonstrating their commitment to both the productivity of their farm and the preservation of the environment.

In summary, the Ahalt Family of Richvale Farm embodies the spirit of cooperation and stewardship in agriculture. Their innovative conservation practices and dedication to sustainable farming serve as a model for others in the industry to follow.



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2023 FREDERICK COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR— THE THOMAS ALBAUGH FAMILY



Please join us in congratulating the 2023 Frederick Cooperator of the year—The Thomas Albaugh Family. Located in Union Bridge, Thomas Albaugh and family farms around 300 acres. While raising beef cattle, the family utilizes prescribed grazing management to help reduce soil erosion and maintain and improve forage quality and quantity.

The Albaugh family also grows hay, corn, and soybeans. In the fall the Albaugh family plants cover crops. By minimizing soil disturbance and keeping the ground covered year-round, they have significantly reduced erosion, preserved soil health, and enhanced water quality in the surrounding area. The family has installed a waste storage structure to facilitate optimal timing of nutrient applications and covered heavy use areas to protect pastures during inclement weather.

In summary, the Albaugh Family of Union Bridge exemplifies the essence of collaboration in agriculture. Their inventive conservation methods and commitment to sustainable farming stand as a blueprint for others in the field to emulate.



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