

# DISTRICT DIGEST

## 5th Annual- Digging Deeper into Soil Health

**SAVE THE DATE**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Digging Deeper into Soil Health will be held on **February 25, 2026** at New Midway Volunteer Fire Company. This year we will have multiple speakers focusing on grazing, silvopasture, and other soil health topics.

### In this Issue:

- Soil Smart Farm Tour -2
- Conservation Focus -2
- Great Frederick Fair -3
- Cooperator of the Year -4
- Conservation Buffer Initiative -5
- Central MD Agronomy Meeting -5

### Meet the Speakers

**Austin Unruh, CEO of Trees for Graziers**  
See how silvopasture helps build healthier herds and landscapes .



**Dr. Amanda Grev, University of MD Extension**  
Learn why shade matters for livestock in Maryland's hot and humid climate as Dr. Amanda Grev explores smart alternatives beyond trees.

**Andrew Sekellick & Alex Soroka**  
U.S. Geological Survey explains what water testing reveals about Best Management Practice effectiveness and stream health.



**When:** February 25, 2026

**Where:** New Midway Volunteer Fire Company  
12019 Woodsboro Pike  
New Midway, MD 21755

**Registration:** 8:00AM  
Event from 8:30AM- 3:00PM

Frederick County  
Soil Conservation District

92 Thomas Johnson Drive,  
Suite 200  
Frederick, MD 21702

(301)-383-8782

**RSVP BY FEBRUARY 11TH!**

Online: Eventbrite (search event title)

By Phone: (301)-383-8782

By Email: kmcafee@fcscd.com

## Soil Smart Farm Tour

On September 4th, the Frederick County Soil Conservation District had the privilege of joining local, state, and federal officials for the Soil Smart Farm Day tour. The tour highlighted four unique operations right here in Frederick County:

- 🍎 Pleasant Hill Produce
- Glade Haven Farms 🐄
- 🍇 Links Bridge Vineyard
- Catoctin Mountain Orchard 🍏

Each stop provided an opportunity to showcase conservation and soil health practices while providing an opportunity to discuss the challenges our farmers face as agricultural businesses. From produce to livestock to orchards and vineyards, participants gained valuable insight into the diversity of Frederick County agriculture and the commitment our farmers have to protecting our natural resources. A special thank you to the participants who opened their doors and shared their stories!



## Conservation Focus- Aerial Seeding Field Day

On September 9th, farmers, partners, and community members gathered in Walkersville for our Conservation Focus: Aerial Seeding Field Day, and what a day it was! Attendees got a firsthand look at drones in action for aerial seeding and had the chance to hear directly from service providers and fellow farmers about best practices for cover crops, frost seeding, and sustainable field management. The day was full of learning, conversation, and practical demonstrations that brought conservation ideas to life.

A special thank you goes to Swift AeroSeed for their impressive demonstration, our generous hosts for opening their farm and sharing their experiences, and everyone who joined in the discussions. We look forward to hosting another Conservation Focus Field Day!

*This event was made possible in part by support from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.*

*\*Pictures continued on page 3*



ABOVE: Bill Chain and Molly Cheatum of Swift AeroSeed map the perimeter of the field before the cover crop application.



BELOW: Bill Chain shows off different parts of the drone.



LEFT: Drone in action spreading a cover crop mix of crimson clover and daikon radish.

## The Great Frederick Fair

Each year staff take on a week of lessons at City Streets, Country Roads during the Great Frederick Fair. The SCD, along with other organizations, host booths that serve over 4,000 Frederick County School students throughout the week. This year staff created an interactive booth that focused on ‘Cracking the Code to Soil Texture’. Students explored different soil textures by feeling different soil types, viewing the soil texture triangle, and learning about the significance of soil texture.



## Annual Cooperators Banquet

This year the Frederick County Soil Conservation District recognized Ryan and Rebecca Grove of Mountainside as the 2025 Cooperator of the Year. Ryan and Rebecca raise cow/calf pairs and freezer beef implementing an intensive rotational grazing system with perennial and annual forages. In crop fields, they rotate in small grains and perennial crops to diversify their crop rotation and improve soil health. Planting green and cover cropping also play an important role in their operation to build organic matter. In conjunction with soil conservation, they've implemented key conservation practices, including a roofed HUA with a waste storage facility, water troughs, stream fencing, and a riparian forest buffer. The Groves dedication to continuous resource improvement and protection exemplifies excellence in soil conservation. Please help us recognize them for all of their conservation efforts.



## Conservation Buffer Initiative

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has opened the 2025–2026 enrollment period for its Conservation Buffer Initiative, running from November 1, 2025– April 30, 2026. This year, farmers who plant forest buffers can qualify for a one-time \$1,000/acre bonus in addition to standard incentive payments.

The program, now in its sixth year, supports three buffer types: forest buffers, grass buffers planted next to waterways or ditches, and watercourse access control areas adjacent to pastures. Program highlights include;

- Payment rates range from \$500 per acre for existing grass buffers to a maximum of \$4,500 per acre to install a riparian forest buffer with pasture fencing.
- Mowing and hay harvesting are allowed for on farm use– nutrient application are not.
- Farmers receive 75% of the project cost upfront and the remaining 25% after verification of planting for new or improved buffers.
- An extra one-time tree bonus payment of \$1,000/acre for enrolled forest buffers is offered.
- Annual maintenance payments are available for forest buffers during the first five years once the planting is well established.
- Contracts are for 5 or 10 years.
- All work must be completed within one year of the agreement signing date.

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis on availability of funding. For questions or more information, please contact the district office.

## Central MD Agronomy Meeting

Each year, the University of Maryland Extension agriculture programs from across the state organize educational sessions related to agronomy and fruit, vegetable and forage production for growers and other agriculture professionals to benefit the community. These sessions help our farmers and agriculture community keep current with up-to-date information about timely agriculture-related topics. 2025 pest management review and a look ahead to 2026, pesticide regulation and nutrient management updates from MDA, the latest agronomic research updates, planning for the farm's next generation, wheat management, and an update on new technologies. Nutrient management certification credits and private applicator pesticide credits will be available.

**When:** Wednesday, Feb 18

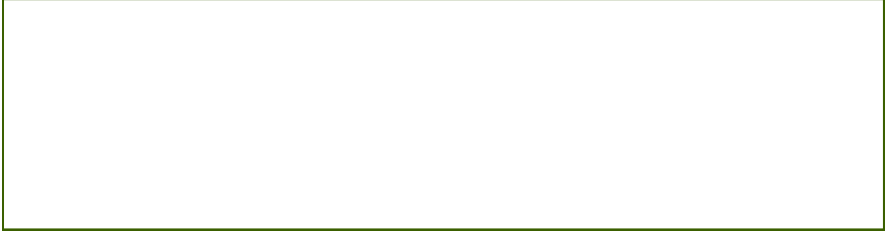
**Where:** Urbana Fire Department Hall  
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

**Cost:** \$25.00

To register visit eventbrite by searching 2026 Central Maryland Agronomy Update or by calling Lisa Strong, University of MD Extension, at (301)-600-3576.



- February 18, 2026 - Central MD Agronomy Meeting at Urbana Fire Hall (SCD Office)
  - February 24, 2026 - Board of Supervisors Meeting (SCD Office)
  - February 25, 2026 - 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Digging Deeper into Soil Health at New Midway VFC
  - March 17, 2026 - Board of Supervisors Meeting (SCD Office)
- Important Dates :



92 Thomas Johnson Drive, Suite 200  
Frederick, MD 21702

**Board of Supervisors**

Benjamin Sowers, *Chairman*  
Diane Flickinger, *Vice Chairman*  
John Falkenstein, *Treasurer*  
Millard 'Wes' Shafer, *Asst. Treasurer*  
Robert Black

**District Staff**

Heather Hutchinson, *District Manager*  
Kendra McAfee, *Soil Cons. Coordinator*  
David Stonesifer, *Urban Technician*  
Mark Matovich, *Urban Technician*  
Roger Thomas, *Urban Engineer*

**MDA Staff**

Holly Boyer, *Planner*  
Emily Doney, *Planner*  
Kaitlyn Fuss, *Planner*  
Cassidy Marquis, *Planner*  
William Rawlings, *Planner*  
Jason Watt, *Engineering Tech.*  
Mark Freese, *Technician*  
Cooper Sweeney, *Technician*  
Chris Zawitoski, *Technician*

**NRCS Staff**

Brent Cammauf, *District Conservationist*  
Teala Campbell, *Soil Conservationist*  
Grace Garst, *Soil Conservationist*  
Cara Green, *Soil Conservationist*  
Sean Daly, *Engineer*  
Matt Drury, *Civil Engineering Tech. (Regional)*  
Mark Buchholz, *Technician*  
Barry Feaga, *Technician*  
Jadie Buhrman, *Program Assistant*



**Follow us on Facebook!**

**@FrederickCountySCD**

*The FCSCD prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status*