

NEW FOOD DONATION TAX CREDIT PILOT PROGRAM

Southern Maryland Farmers eligible for up to \$5,000 state tax credit.

On September 11, 2017, Governor Larry Hogan approved emergency regulations by the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review (AELR) committee to launch a food donation tax credit pilot program.

“This innovative program encourages farmers to donate fresh produce and more to non-profit organizations that support those in need,” said Governor Hogan. “This is a way for Maryland farmers to further help their communities and ensure their harvest does not go to waste.”

The Governor signed into law the Farm Food Donation Pilot Program (SB 416) authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Comptroller, to issue a State tax

credit of up to \$5,000 per calendar year to qualified farmers or farm businesses that make eligible food donations and certified organic produce donations to charitable organizations.

The pilot program is limited to Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George’s and St. Mary’s counties for the tax years 2017, 2018 and 2019. The cumulative value of donations shall not exceed \$250,000 per fiscal year.

Farmers and non-profit organizations who are interested in participating should contact the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Karen Kirksey at (410) 841-5862 or karen.kirksey1@maryland.gov for more information.

ANNE ARUNDEL SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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QUARTERLY DIRT

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WINTER 2017 NEWSLETTER

IMPORTANT DATES

2018 NRCS Conservation Program Sign Up
Deadline (EQIP, AMA, and RCPP)
Dec. 15, AASCD Office

Crops IMP Workshop NM/PAT
Dec. 19, Anne Arundel County Ext. Office

Pesticide Certification Training
Jan. 9, Anne Arundel County Ext. Office

Southern Maryland Forage Conference
Jan. 10, Baden Volunteer Fire Dept.

Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis
Feb. 7, Governor Calvert House

Southern Maryland Vegetable & Fruit
Production Meeting
Feb. 8, Bowie Lodge



Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District

2662 Riva Road, Suite 150

Annapolis, MD 21401

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT MANAGER JOHN CZAJKOWSKI

Fall is officially here and as we head into winter months, farmer will be finishing their harvest, planting cover crop, and staying busy with the various trainings and conferences taking place across the state, many right here in Southern Maryland.

Now is the time to sign up for NRCS Programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Applications are due by December 15. Our District staff is available to meet with you and discuss possible projects for your farm.



WELCOME JUSTIN VALKOS

We are pleased to introduce Justin Valkos, our new Soil Conservation Specialist with the Urban Team at AASCD.

Justin is a graduate of the University of Maryland College Park with a degree in Environmental Science and Technology. Before joining AASCD, Justin was an Environmental Scientist with Geo-Technology Associates, Inc.

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CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE YEAR: THE WAYSON FAMILY

Since 1956, the Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District has been honoring farmers and other individuals who have made a positive impact in conserving natural resources in Anne Arundel County. This year, we are pleased to recognize the Wayson Family of Friendship. The Waysons have lived at Hopewell Farm in Southern Anne Arundel County since before the Civil War.

Like many, Hopewell began as a traditional tobacco farm. As the farm transitioned away from growing tobacco, they diversified into a variety of new farming businesses including beef cattle and a horse boarding and training facility. For more than a decade, the Waysons have worked with the Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District to implement best management practices on their farm including grazing management, heavy use areas, watering facilities and cover crops. Hopewell Farm was the 101st farm in Maryland to be certified through the Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP).

The Wayson Family was honored as Conservationists of the Year at our annual awards dinner which was held on October 26, 2017 at Michael's on the South River.



CHANGES TO THE AASCD URBAN DIVISION

After a nearly 30 year career with the Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District, our Senior Soil Conservationist, Chris Maex has retired. Filling her shoes is Kevin Holland who has been with the District for more than four years. Kevin has 20 years of experience in sediment and erosion control. He is joined in the Urban Division by Paul Hafner who came to the District earlier this year, Justin Valkos who joined our staff in November, and Shelley Hopkins, who devotes part of her time to the Urban

Division's responsibilities. The Urban Division utilizes guidelines from the Maryland Department of the Environment's 2011 Standards and Specifications for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control to ensure the protection of Maryland's streams, rivers and Chesapeake Bay. We review nearly 3,000 submittals per year which include grading, erosion and sediment control plans for residential and commercial construction as well as forest harvest, mining, landfills, stream restoration and county or municipal projects. Learn more at aascd.org/urban.

SAND BOX FOR GROWN UPS: ORGANIC MATTER MATTERS

Organic matter can be divided into two categories: active and stabilized.

“Active organic matter” is the portion made of fresh organic material and living organisms, as well as partially decomposed material that is slowly decomposing. Active organic matter and the microbes that feed on it are central to nutrient cycles in the soil. Nutrients, especially nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur, are held in this active organic matter until soil organisms release them for plant use.

While active organic matter may decompose over a few decades, the stabilized portion of organic matter is made of larger, more complex compounds that are much more difficult for microbes to degrade. Much of the stabilized organic matter in the soil is highly decomposed plant and animal tissues that grew over several centuries. This organic matter becomes carbon-rich humus that's resistant to further decay.

“Stabilized organic matter” acts

like a sponge and can absorb six times its weight in water. It's also a reservoir for nutrient storage, sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and other sources. Considering the long list of benefits organic matter has on soil health and crop production, increasing organic matter is one of the most important steps to improving farm profitability and sustainability.

In general, there are three ways to do that:

1. Increase the amount of plant and root production;
2. apply carbon-rich materials to the soil; and
3. use practices that slow rather than speed decomposition.

Cover crops, green manure crops, and perennial forage crops add organic matter, as do compost and manure.

AASCD offers free soil testing for cooperators to measure organic matter in soil. Contact us to learn more or visit nrcs.usda.gov for more information about soil health.



Photo: Maryland Department of Agriculture

NACD RELEASES 2018 FARM BILL REQUESTS

The Farm Bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that is renewed every five years. Lawmakers have already begun the process of crafting the next Farm Bill which will come out in 2018. Of the approximately \$956 billion dollars allocated in the Farm Bill, about 7% goes towards the Conservation Title (Title II).

In 2014, Conservation Title Funding took a 10% funding cut and continues to be cut annually during the appropriations process. NACD says, “Every dollar cut from mandatory conservation programs leads directly to less conservation on the ground and only increases natural resources concerns and the probability of regulatory hassles.” NACD is asking Congress to make no further cuts to Conservation Title Funding and hopes to see Congress make an increase in

funding.

NACD included several other Farm Bill requests including:

- Add language in the next Farm Bill that will emphasize the importance of technical assistance provided through the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program
- Repeal of the DUNS/SAMS registration system for participants in NRCS cost-share programs
- Continue existing policy of conservation compliance for Title I payments
- Direct USDA to be proactive in messaging that conservation practices such as cover cropping are allowed within crop insurance policies
- Increase EQIP baseline funding

Read NACD's full letter with requests at nacdnet.org/category/farm-bill/

AASCD HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

We are excited to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website. Visit aascd.org to see our new look and access important information about the district. You can also find a link to our facebook page and form to sign up for electronic newsletters.

OUR MISSION: CONSERVING SOIL & NATURAL RESOURCES

Hugh Hammond Bennett is called the “father of Soil Conservation” and was the first Chief of SCS. His efforts in the 1920s and throughout his career led to a public awakening to the issues of soil erosion.

“National action may be led and aided by government, but the soil must be conserved ultimately by those who till the land and live by its products.”

- HUGH HAMMOND BENNETT

The purpose of the Soil Conservation District is to provide expertise and technical assistance to help farmers conserve natural resources and in turn increase productivity in their operation. The Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District relies on the people it serves. While our mission is to address soil and natural resource conservation in Anne Arundel County, it is also to address the needs of our customers. There are times when this means that our District needs to work with government and elected officials to ensure that regulations are conducive to a productive agricultural business. First and foremost, we keep in mind that soil and natural resource conservation are our priority. Second, we recognize that we need productive and profitable farmers to maintain the land and manage best management practices that will protect our natural resources.

Our expertise in conservation and strong connections with the agricultural community are essential to helping our government balance a vibrant local economy with a healthy and sustainable environment.