



STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2025

WASHINGTON COUNTY SOIL
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ORGANIZATION

The Washington County Soil Conservation District (WCSCD) was organized and established on January 22, 1940 under the Maryland Soil Conservation District Law. A Soil Conservation District constitutes a political subdivision of the state and, as a public body, exercises public powers.

The law includes a declaration of policy that has guided the WCSCD in responding to the needs of Washington County residents:

“It is the policy of the General Assembly to provide for the conservation of the soil, water and related resources of the State and for the control and prevention of soil erosion in order to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect the public lands, protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the State, and otherwise enhance their living environment.”

To meet this policy challenge the District Board of Supervisors of WCSCD provide programs that are balanced in their approach to natural resource management. It has been the belief of the WCSCD that voluntary incentive driven programs of direct technical and financial assistance to landowners and land users accomplishes the most balanced result with the most lasting effects.

The District Board of Supervisors is made up of five residents from Washington County. They are appointed for five year terms by the State Soil Conservation Committee from recommendations from the Washington County Farm Bureau, Washington County Cooperative Extension, and two at-large positions selected from residents of the County, and the remaining supervisor is appointed by the County governing body.

The Supervisors meet monthly to guide and direct the work of the WCSCD, which consists of personnel, assigned to them from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Maryland Department of Agriculture, and locally funded District personnel. The Supervisors oversee funding from Federal, State and Local sources to accomplish our goal of balancing a productive land in harmony with a quality environment.



“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”
— Wendell Berry

CORE VALUES

- ◇ A commitment to respect the desires and objectives of the landowner
- ◇ Supervisors and staff exhibit the highest ethical standards and are held accountable for their performance
- ◇ Diligence and integrity in meeting expectations of our customers and cooperating agencies
- ◇ Providing compensation and recognition to employees commensurate with their status as natural resource management professionals
- ◇ A commitment to preserve and strengthen our core partnership between Washington County Government, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Maryland Department of Agriculture.
- ◇ A commitment to excellence in customer service for our customers.

“History is largely a record of human struggle to wrest the land from nature, because man relies for sustenance on the products of the soil. So direct, is the relationship between soil erosion, the productivity of the land, and the prosperity of people, that the history of mankind, to a considerable degree at least, may be interpreted in terms of the soil and what has happened to it as the result of human use.” - Hugh H. Bennett and W.C. Lowdermilk, circa 1930's

VISION, MISSION AND FUNCTION

VISION

We are recognized for effective leadership in natural resource conservation in assisting people and communities to achieve a productive land in harmony with a quality environment

MISSION

To provide effective leadership in addressing the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources, through delivery of programs in education, information, financial incentives, and technical assistance to the land owners and land users of Washington County

FUNCTION

To use available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so they meet the needs of the local land owner or land user for the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources

"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery and the other that heat comes from the furnace." - Aldo Leopold

WHO WE SERVE



WCSCD provides technical, educational, financial and information services to a wide range of customers, including agriculture producers, developers, engineers, homeowners, as well as ,Local, State and Federal cooperating agencies, municipalities and government entities.

Agricultural Producers: Traditional producers, such as, dairy, beef, poultry, swine, orchard, nursery, horticultural and grain farmers, Non-traditional operators, such as horses, goats, llama’s and other specialty animals and crops.

Technical, financial, and informational resources and services are provided to reduce or eliminate sources of agricultural point and non-point source pollution while maintaining a productive and sustainable agriculture in Washington County.

Developers/Engineers: The District provides Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, small pond, Forest Harvest, and subdivision, review and approval services to the engineering and development communities. Information and education services are provided through the use of soil survey, historical and current resource inventories, as well as, direct technical assistance to these customers.

WCSCD provides this service to meet statutory responsibilities and provide for the conservation of natural resources during development activities. WCSCD provides field services through Pre-Construction Meetings, Interim Water Quality Inspections and Final Site Closeout Reviews through an agreement with the Maryland Department of the Environment. These field services help ensure that erosion and sedimentation from construction sites is kept to a minimum and that when construction is complete sites are stabilized with permanent vegetation.

Students: Educational programs, such as, the Envirothon, and classroom demonstrations provide hands-on training in the area of soils, wildlife, aquatics, forestry and an annual current environmental issue. Education of the next generation is essential in maintaining the progress made in conservation of natural resources.

Homeowners: Through one on one contact and outreach at the annual Home Builders Association of Washington County annual Home Show WCSCD advises homeowners on backyard conservation with topics such as drainage control, sink holes, composting, lawn fertilization and plantings to improve water quality and provide habitat for wildlife.

Private ownership of land makes up the majority of land ownership in Washington County. As the landscape becomes fragmented into smaller parcels it is imperative that the District respond with approaches that address those natural resource issues. The actions of individuals in their own backyards when taken as a whole contribute significantly to erosion reduction, water quality improvement and creation of valuable wildlife habitats.

Cooperating Organizations: Cooperating organizations such as County Government, Maryland Department of Agriculture, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA-Farm Services Agency, Department of the Environment, Department. of Natural Resources, University of MD, Cooperative Extension Service, Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council and municipalities provide funding and technical services to assist with fulfilling our mission. WCSCD in turn provides services to all cooperating organizations to assist them in their mission.

“Nature has endowed the Earth with glorious wonders and vast resources that man may use for his own ends. Regardless of our tastes or our way of living, there are none that present more variations to tax our imagination than the soil, and certainly none so important to our ancestors, to ourselves, and to our children” - Charles Kel-

STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan for WCSCD focusses on our four major programmatic areas of service.

District Operations: Functions carried out by SCD employees and District Supervisors, such as, administration of financial accounts, human resources , policies, office management, Board of Supervisors monthly meetings, travel, training, ,program administration, and partnership coordination.

Agricultural Conservation: Functions related to administration and coordination of State, Federal and Local conservation programs. Staff provide turn key services including conservation planning to identify resource concerns, site survey, conservation practice design, permitting and construction supervision. Local administration of the State cost share program, Cover Crop Program, Manure Transport Program and assistance with delivery of Federal cost share and incentive programs. Primary focus of the program is assisting the agricultural sector in meeting the Watershed Implementation Plan and Farm Bill goals.

Urban Conservation: Environmental compliance reviews including review and approval of Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plans for all earth disturbances requiring approval under State law, and compliance with the County's Sensitive Area requirements primarily related to identification and conservation of stream buffers and steep slopes. Field inspection services under agreement with the MD Department of the Environment. The District assists Washington County with implementation of the Forest Conservation Ordinance, identifying and enlisting landowners to preserve or create new forests with funds provided by the development community.

Information and Education: Information and education crosses all of our service areas and includes our County Envirothon competition, outreach to students in the class room through hands on demonstrations, and participation in community events such as the Washington County Homebuilders-Home Show, Boonsboro Green Fest and Washington County Ag Expo. Our web site and quarterly newsletters along with social media provide another element to our outreach.

"Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work." **Peter Drucker**

GOALS 2020-2025

- ◇ Strengthen and streamline District Operations
- ◇ Provide for adequate, trained and certified staff across all areas of service delivery
- ◇ Deliver Conservation Planning, Technical assistance and financial incentives to enable the agricultural community to reach Watershed Implementation Plan III goals
- ◇ Maintain, increase and broaden funding sources from partnership agencies, Washington County, fees for service, and grants
- ◇ Continue implementation of the Antietam Creek Watershed Restoration Plan
- ◇ Improve efficiency and service responsiveness to all customers
- ◇ Expand outreach and education through community events, quarterly newsletters, published news articles and use of social media
- ◇ Continue partnership with Washington County, to implement the Forest Conservation Ordinance payment in lieu program to permanently conserve existing forests and create new forest lands
- ◇ Supervisors and staff participation annually in State and national conferences, as well as, training opportunities to stay current in the field of conservation

Annual goals in each area of service delivery will be developed and monitored for implementation by the Board of Supervisors and the District Manager. Staff will report annually on progress and develop new annual goals for approval and implementation at the beginning of each fiscal year.

There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long range risks and costs of comfortable inaction. – **John F. Kennedy**

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

GOAL # 1: Acquire and develop new staff and Supervisors

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate staffing needs	Identified staff needs for Urban and Ag programs– 9/30/19
2. Recruit new Associate Supervisors	Tyler Harp added as new Associate Supervisor– 3/30/20
3. Create and update position descriptions for all District positions	All position descriptions reviewed one position needs description. Updates to be completed in FY21
4. Create policy for on-boarding all new staff	Not started
5. Identify and provide training for staff and Supervisors	District Staff attended IECA Mid Atlantic, Stream Restoration Conf. and On-line Fred Pryor sessions; Ag Planner attended various sessions. (7/1/19-5/30/20)

GOAL # 2: Provide training and development for District Supervisors, and staff.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Maintain professional certifications for staff through continuing education	Manager and Urban Program Director met requirements for Envirocert, Certifications. 9/30/19
2. Participate in MASCD Summer and Winter meetings	Staff and Supervisors attended MASCD Meetings and one Supervisor and Manager attended NACD. 8/1/19-2/28/20
3. Staff attend Human Resources training as needed	All staff attended sexual harassment training and payroll law training

GOAL #3: Improve District administrative and fiscal procedures

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate existing policies on an annual basis.	Interrupted due to Corona virus
2. Evaluate fiscal and accounting procedures for compliance with acceptable standards	Policies to be developed FY21
3. Evaluate administrative procedures that impact staff workload across all service delivery functions in context of position descriptions	To be accomplished FY21

GOAL # 4: Secure adequate funding for all areas of service delivery

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate all funding sources, operating budgets, cash reserves, and grant funds to develop the annual operating budget	County budget submitted and funded at FY20 level \$218,180, State budget and Bay Trust budgets flat as of 6/30/20
2. Participate fully in the County and State Budget processes to secure needed funding	Budget work 12/1/19-6/30/20 Staff will present overall District budget to Supervisors at June Board meeting
3. Develop/define funding sources for District Manager, Urban Program Director, Administrative Assistant, and Engineering Technician	

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

GOAL # 1: Assist agricultural community with meeting the goals of the Watershed Implementation Plan

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Work with MD Department of Agriculture to hire permanent State funded Conservation Planner	In process with MDA
2. Monthly monitoring of BMP design and delivery to customers	Manager working with staff and MDA Area Coordinator-Ongoing
3. Develop 3,000 acres of Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans per year	3,758Acres planned and 75 BMP's installed
4. Identify and provide training for agricultural staff	Ag Staff attended soil health, Conservation Desktop Training , training to maintain NRCS Planner Certification and Nutrient Management Certifications
5. Participate in the USDA, NRCS Local Work Group process to obtain available financial incentives for agricultural producers	On Hold with NRCS submitted forms etc. on time
6. Provide technical assistance and conservation planning services to support agricultural producers participation in USDA, NRCS cost-share programs to implement BMP's	Assisted NRCS with cost share to farmers totaling \$713,582. Programs implemented include EQIP, RCPP, CSP, etc. 18 Federal Contracts for \$419,852 were obligated

GOAL # 2: Improve local administration of State cost share programs

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Review all administrative procedures	Ongoing
2. Develop application and claim checklist	Ongoing
3. Conduct monthly follow-up with approved projects to increase implementation	Cover Crop Program spring claims changed by Coronavirus; being handled by MDA staff from home.
4. Evaluate and improve cover crop program workload distribution	Purchased Tracfone for MDA Planner to facilitate.

GOAL # 3: Actively participate in BMP verification efforts with Md Dept of Agriculture

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Follow-up with customers regarding issues identified in the first seven rounds of verification	Completed – 2/26/20
2. Assist MDA verifiers with any new rounds of verification	No new rounds started by MDA

GOAL #4: Maintain and expand funding to implement Watershed Implementation Plan III

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate all funding sources, operating budgets, cash reserves, and grant funds to develop annual operating budget	County budget submitted and funded at FY20 level \$218,180, State budget and Bay Trust budgets flat as of 6/30/20
2. Pursue grants to implement agricultural conservation projects for the Antietam Creek Watershed	Approval from MDE for \$400,000 stream restoration on Clagett farm– 4/1/20
3. Participate fully in the County and State Budget processes to secure needed funding	Budget process 12/1/19-6/30/20
4. Develop/define funding sources for District Manager, Urban Program Director, Administrative Assistant, and Engineering Technician	Budget process 12/1/19-6/30/20

URBAN CONSERVATION

GOAL # 1: Provide excellence of service to the urban community

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Provide a maximum ten working day turn around for all plan reviews	Average turn around time is 4 days for all plan types.
2. Evaluate all administrative procedures to improve efficiency	Ongoing as part of database upgrade; eliminated review of re-zoning cases
3. Hire and train full time Engineering Technician	Hired Mark Kendle 10/16/19-Training is ongoing
4. Maintain professional certifications through continuing education	Manager met CPESC requirements, Urban program Director met CESSWI requirements-9/30/19
5. Bring the Forest Conservation Ordinance Payment in Lieu program under the umbrella of the Urban Program	Urban staff began participating in the process for training to assist with implementation
6. Evaluate data management and database upgrade	Selected vendor for database upgrade; executed contract for \$20,000-12/15/19 process is 70% completed

GOAL # 2: Promote full implementation of all approved Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plans

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate delivery of field services with annual meeting with Maryland Department of the Environment and County staff	On hold due to Coronavirus
2. Evaluate potential benefits of adding inspection services after erosion and sediment controls have been installed	On hold until FY21
3. Increase site visits as part of initial plan review	On hold due to Coronavirus; more visits were starting to take place

GOAL #3: Assist the City of Hagerstown with meeting MS4 requirements

1. Develop and submit proposal for a pilot Urban BMP Incentive Program.	Submitted proposal-8/23/19 proposal accepted pending Stormwater Utility approval by Hagerstown City Council
2. Conduct pilot program and if successful develop program for the future	Depending on City of Hagerstown actions will begin pilot development 7/1/20
3. Continue participation in the Stormwater Advisory Committee as requested	Manager participated in all committee meetings. Proposal is in hands of Hagerstown City Council for approval and implementation of Stormwater Utility fees beginning 7/1/20

GOAL #4: Ensure adequate funding to conduct Urban program functions

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Evaluate fees to provide for periodic increases	Ongoing
2. Seek funding for all positions implementing the Urban Program from Washington County as part of the annual budgeting process	Submitted County budget seeking additional funding for Urban staff-1/15/20
3. Provide Forest Conservation Ordinance services to Washington County and dedicate a portion of the funding earned to the Urban program	Submitted four properties for approval, received approval for all , two properties completed ; income to District was \$78,777. Projects protect 87.53 acres existing forest land
4. Seek an increase in the fee for Sensitive Area reviews from Washington County	On hold due to Coronavirus. Will pursue for FY21 based on County budget results

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

GOAL # 1: Conduct Washington County Envirothon

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Conduct fundraising to support the event	Conducted fundraising letter campaign raising \$2,650 In support from 12 Donors
2. Participate in the State Envirothon	Submitted grant application and received approval for \$1,500 grant. Will use funds for current expenses and hold balance for 2021 event.
3. Seek grant funds to support the program from MASCD	
4. Provide stipend for coaches to attend the State Envirothon	Local, State and National events cancelled due to Coronavirus

GOAL # 2: : Improve outreach to agricultural community

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Publish quarterly e-newsletter	Published first ,second ,and third issues of The Conservation Corkboard
2. Publish 4 news articles to promote agricultural BMP's and programs	Published two articles promoting Forest Conservation Program and Envirothon
3. Staff display during evening hours at Ag Expo (3 evenings)	Staff manned booth at Ag Expo– 7/13/20-7/20/19 weekdays only
4. Develop e-mail list to foster timely communication with customers	E-mail list is developed and being updated continually, used for e-newsletter, cover crop, and office Coronavirus response updates

GOAL #3: Improve outreach to the urban community

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS TAKEN & DATE
1. Promote Backyard Conservation at the Washington County Homebuilders annual Home Show and Boonsboro Green Fest	Staff manned booth at home show– 3/7/20-3/8/20. Green Fest cancelled due to Coronavirus
2. Include urban conservation articles in each quarterly E-newsletter	Included in each issue of newsletter
3. Participate in monthly Land Use Council meetings	Staff participated in all monthly meetings until cancelled due to Coronavirus
4. Update website to include more Urban program content	Updates completed for new fee system and plan chart, work to update is ongoing.