Washington County Soil Conservation District

The Conservation Place Corkboard

September 2021

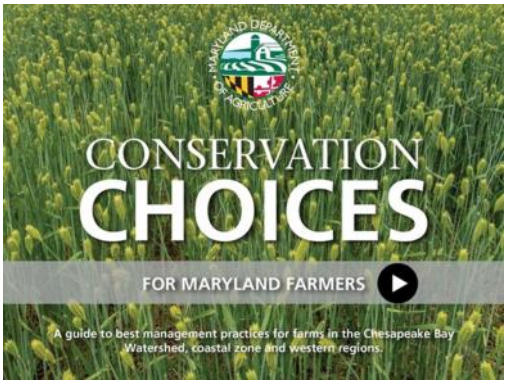
District Office Now Open to the Public

After more than a year of restrictions on public access to the Washington County SCD office, we are now open to limited walk-in access to the public. No appointment is needed to visit the office, but if you wish to meet with a specific person, please contact the office to ensure they will be available. Some employees of the Maryland Department of Agriculture and NRCS are continuing limited telework in accordance with the policies of their agency.

Wearing of masks is not required, but encouraged, for those not fully vaccinated, when visiting the office in person. Most meetings will be conducted at the front counter so some social distance can be maintained.

We thank all our agricultural and urban program customers for their understanding and patience as we provided service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shared From MDA's September 2021 Monthly Newsletter, Conservation Buzz

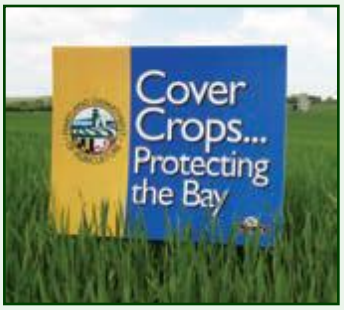


TAKE A TOUR OF MARYLAND'S FARM COUNTRY

This beautiful 2:39 minute video highlights popular conservation practices used by Maryland farmers to control erosion, improve soil heath, combat pests, protect local streams and manage livestock and poultry manure.

Copy and paste link below to watch.

Conservation Choices for Maryland Farmers - YouTube



2021-2022 Cover Crop Program

For any questions, please contact

Ginger Noble
ginger.noble@maryland.gov

Or

Kristina Stair
kristinam.stair@maryland.gov

https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/cover_crop.aspx

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

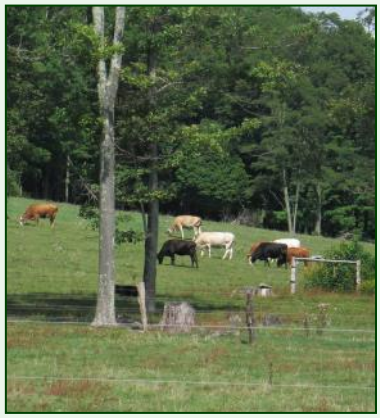
Prescribed Grazing

By Ginger Noble, MDA Conservation Specialist III
BS Dairy & Animal Science, MBA

Often, we discuss "grazing" with our operators without ever going into the details of the different types of grazing. Generically, "grazing" simply means providing a living plant or forage as feed without harvesting or killing it first. Conservation specialists follow the USDA-NRCS definition of Prescribed Grazing: "Managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals with the intent to achieve specific ecological, economic, and management objectives".

Ultimately, Prescribed Grazing must meet a set of criteria, versus just putting animals out with no consideration for yield or nutrition. Prescribed Grazing is meant to do several things, including one or more of the following:

- Improve or maintain desired species composition, structure and/or vigor of plant communities.
- Improve or maintain quantity and/or quality of forage for grazing and browsing animals' health and productivity.
- Improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and/or quantity.
- Improve or maintain riparian and/or watershed function.
- Reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil health.
- Improve or maintain the quantity, quality, or connectivity of food and/or cover available for wildlife.



This may all seem pretty daunting, leaving us to wonder "why do I care? Why would I want to take the time to considering prescribed grazing?". Well, first and foremost, to protect your resources. Pastures that are not managed properly can become bare or overgrazed, leading to loss of topsoil, loss of production, and an increased cost in both maintaining the soil and the animals. By allowing even long period rotation, there is an increased ability for the soil to regain organic matter, decrease erosion, and increase plant productivity which results in the need for less feed supplementation. Increased forage production also means less in equipment costs and manual labor for forage harvest and feeding. Overgrazing is also attributed for increased invasive species of non-native plants and weeds. Overgrazing also reduces the ability for preferred plants to regenerate adequately due to leaf loss, damaged root systems, and increased compaction which decreases root movement and water infiltration.

What are some ways to implement a suitable prescribed grazing system? Start by having animal numbers which reflect plan production during summer months, as most pasture are primarily cool season grasses which experience a summer slump in production. In other words, know your forage production and the nutrient needs of your stock. If you need help with those calculations, there are a number of online resources, include an online apps from Colorado State University (Stocking rate & carrying capacity - Range Management (colostate.edu).

(continued from Page 2)

Consider a more intensive rotational system to allow appropriate rest and regrowth times for paddocks. Don't graze to the ground! Allow approximately 5" of vegetation to encourage root growth and maintain healthy plants for regrowth. Diversify by incorporating warm season species into the pasture mix. Note that any rehabilitation or additional seeding will take approximately a year to establish. Lime and fertilize in accordance with soil test and Nutrient Management Plan recommendations. No matter the intensity of your grazing system, always make sure you have easy access to clean water.

For more ideas on how prescribed grazing can help you with your operation, feel free to view this informational video that explores how Kenny Sites of Sheridan, AR, uses prescribed grazing to manage his ranch (https://youtu.be/JOiyO31rOis). As always, operators are welcome to contact us do a pasture score, create a grazing plan for your operation, and/or implement a more intensive prescribed grazing system.

Resources:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/md/home/?cid=nrcs144p2_027164
Avoid Overgrazing Your Pastures (psu.edu)
Stocking rate & carrying capacity - Range Management (colostate.edu)
https://youtu.be/JOiyO31rOis

Photo Credits:
Ginger Noble
Elmer Weibley

Urban Program News

Welcome to September!!

Well, before I begin writing my official article, I must share some news. Many of you know, I began employment with the District, April 1997, as a part-time District Secretary; many moons ago (It is so funny to think about, this was before at least one of our staff members was born) and on April 14, 2021, I became Assistant Manager! ***Thank you to our District Manager and Board of Supervisors for this recognition!***

In our February 2021 newsletter, I introduced you to our "in the future" projects, one of which was our planned Pilot Butterfly Garden/Monarch Waystation at our office complex. Well, to say the least, it has been a huge success.

I began planning in the Fall/Winter of 2020 and June 4, 2021, it came to fruition. With research, planting media/plants/mulch (purchased from Sunny Meadows Garden Center), rain barrel installations, my time (with a *little* help from my husband), and staff time, the garden came to life!

Following the completion, I applied for, registered, and received certification by Monarch Watch as an official Monarch Waystation. For those not familiar with a "Monarch Waystation", it is a site providing milkweeds, nectar sources, and shelter needed to sustain Monarch Butterflies as they migrate through North America.

Wow; I know right! It has been absolutely amazing to watch the garden flourish and provide the Waystation benefits, but also, other pollinators, such as, Honey Bees, Hummingbirds, Hummingbird Moths, etc. We have also had a baby bunny, deer, and many other butterfly varieties.

Staff members have watched and taken pictures of the Monarch life stages; I have included a few pictures with this article.

I had an interest in pursuing this project for multiple reasons, a few are: To provide education to our office to allow us to assist the community with potential projects; to utilize as an educational component in what we as conservationists do; to allow for more infiltration at our "impervious" (macadam, rooftop, etc.) office complex; to even possibly allow for our building owner to receive credits toward the newly initiated Stormwater Utility Fee in place within the City of Hagerstown; and of course, lastly, my passion/ love for gardening. There is a certain calm that comes along with gardening. My Father-in-Law used to say, "digging in the dirt is good for the soul!".

I would like to thank our staff for all their assistance during and following (with watering) garden completion. Please call for an appointment or stop by to view our garden, I would love to share it with you!

The past two years have been challenging to say the least due to COVID-19. We certainly hope the last few months of 2021 bring forth hope, calm, and "business as usual" for everyone!

Warm Regards,

Dee

Denise "*Dee*" Price, CESSWI, CSI
Assistant Manager
Washington County Soil Conservation District
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Hagerstown, MD 21740
301-797-6821, Ext. 3
www.conservationplace.com
dee@conservationplace.com


MONARCH WAYSTATION
This site provides milkweeds, nectar sources, and shelter needed to sustain monarch butterflies as they migrate through North America.
Certified and registered by Monarch Watch as an official Monarch Waystation.
CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT MONARCH HABITATS
www.MONARCHWATCH.org

MDA announces Increased Cost-Share Assistance for Farmers Installing Best Management Practices

Governor Larry Hogan signed into law, Senate Bill 344 April 14, 2021. This change in State Law will now allow the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) through the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Assistance Program (known as MACS) to provide up to 100% State funding for certain conservation practices. The current MACS program limits all conservation practices to 87.5% cost-share assistance.

The new allowance for 100% assistance applies to:

Stream Exclusion Fencing
Critical Area Planting
Diversion
Field Border
Riparian Forest Buffer
Grade Stabilization Structure
Hedgerow Planting
Structure for Water Control
Saturated Buffer
Subsurface Drain
Underground Outlet
Wetland Creation for Water Quality
Conservation Cover
Sediment Basin
Windbreak Establishment
Riparian Herbaceous Cover
Filter Strip
Grassed Waterway
Lined Waterway or Outlet
Terrace System
Subsurface Bioreactor
Tree and Shrub Establishment
Wetland Restoration for Water Quality

The selected conservation practices provide a high degree of water quality benefit while having relatively low unit costs. Each of the practices receiving 100% cost-share have a maintenance life of at least 10 years, provide an environmental benefit consistent with Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan, and except for Stream Exclusion Fencing, are in-field or edge-of-field practices that mitigate nutrient loss associated with crop production.

Just as in the current program, cost reimbursement will not exceed the established Flat Rate for each component of the practice. If a project component cost exceeds the Flat Rate, the reimbursement will be up to the established Flat Rate for each component, if costs are below the Flat Rate, they can be reimbursed at 100% of actual installed cost. Our staff will explain each application in detail to ensure understanding of potential cost-share assistance prior to submission to MDA.

To be eligible for the 100% cost-share rate, the farm where the practice is to be located, must have a current Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan (SCWQP) prepared and approved prior to application.

If you are interested in participating in the MACS Program and need a SCWQP, please contact one of our Conservation Planners, Ginger Noble or Kristina Stair at 301-797-6821, Extension 3.

We expect the regulations regarding the change in State law to be finalized in the late August-September time frame. Please contact our Conservation Planners as soon as possible if you need a SCWQP so you may participate.

This could be a great opportunity to install stream exclusion fencing for livestock at potentially no cost to you and maintain your compliance with Nutrient Management regulations.

We are also able to cost-share perimeter fence for grazing operations under certain conditions ; our Planners can assist with development of a Grazing Plan and explain the opportunities and limits on cost-share assistance for perimeter fence.

Washington County
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Telling Your Story

Leslie Hart
Business Development Specialist
For Agriculture, Tourism and Hospitality
Washington County
Department of Business Development

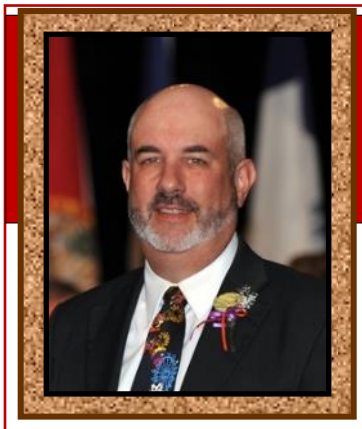
Agriculture just does its own thing. Farmers, ranchers, producers, growers, they all focus on what they do best. Feed and Clothe America and the World. We are so consumed by doing things better, more economical, having healthy animals and sustainable soils that we often forget that we are letting someone else tell our story. And they are getting it wrong.

So, what can you do? Well, take advantage of every new client, customer and partner that comes to the farm to do business and or interacts with you, your family, and your employees. Share your Proud "Farming Moment" and your business strategies to deal with the COVID-19 changes. Tell anyone and everyone who will listen why it is so important for you to take care of the land for the next generation. Educate your neighbors about the importance of agriculture. Share the technology that is becoming necessary in the ag world, from tractor technology to dairy testing, to tracking cow behavior and comfort. How many people do you know that have a nutritionist working with them in their household telling them what to eat? Well, our animals have nutritionists. Share that information and watch folks open their eyes to how well we take care of our animals. The big one these days is Milk. Natures perfect beverage. So how in the world did the almond ever get involved?

So, Washington County Farmers…Speak up and Speak out. Here are a few quick guidelines to follow when sharing the story of agriculture. Your story is simple and easy to tell. Keep it uncomplicated. Avoid words like TMR. You and your family and your employees need to tell your farm story. Keep the message consistent and true to your farm. Tell why it's important for you to tell your story. I want you, Mr. Neighbor, to understand how important my animals are to my farm and business. My animals eat every day before I ever sit down to a meal. Be open to questions and create an open conversation that allows for questions and answers. Focus on the best farm stories and repeat those.

Farming is a rewarding business and has so many hidden parts and pieces that most of the world never knows. How many families do you know that get to take their children with them to work every day? How many families sit down every day to eat with the family and employees? How many families do you know that get to be part of the best industry in the entire world? Well, I can say I know a lot of families and they are farm families. Share your story. Pass along the good word. *~ Leslie Hart*



Take a Pasture at Home

~ Jeff Semler, Extension Educator, AGNR
UME - Washington County

Summer is the time to access your pastures and determine which ones need to be renovated and which need some TLC. Hopefully, you practice some degree of rotational grazing, so while you are moving your stock, take time to look down and take inventory.

Fall is the best time to renovate or rejuvenate your pastures, and waiting until the last minute is not a great plan. If you don't have a recent soil sample (greater than 3 years), it is time to take one. I usually recommend soil samples be taken in the fall, which can still be done after seeding. Whether you take a sample in August or October, be consistent and continue to take samples every three years in the same season.

Next, it is essential to get an accurate idea of what the stands are like in each pasture you are considering. We find the "point step" approach beneficial for this evaluation. To do a point step, take a clipboard with a paper record form. Randomly walk the pasture like you would take a soil sample, and every so often (20 to 30 steps depending on the size of the pasture), look down at your shoe tip and put a mark for whatever plant (or bare ground) your shoe tip touches. It is a little humbling to do this as it requires you to identify most of the plants out there.

Now, interpret the results. Do you have at least 50 percent in desirable species and few very undesirable weeds?

If so, then an herbicide, fertility, and rest strategy might be all that is called for. You might consider overseeding the pasture with desired species and varieties or frost seeding clovers.

If less than half the plants are desirable, we suggest killing the existing stand and planting an improved variety of species that will complement your forage system. You may choose native warm-season grass, novel endophyte tall fescue, or some other niche forage. There are many options, and the renovation process is a chance to upgrade your forage system to use new and improved genetics.

If you decide to fully renovate, study the species you want to plant and establish them at the recommended time. Since most producers are not blessed with unlimited land resources, it is recommended to stage your renovations, first by terminating the current stand with herbicides, tillage of a combination. The timing should be August 1 – September 15, depending where you are located.

Second, plant a winter annual to both provide forage and fall weed suppression. Depending on your forage needs, wheat, barley, triticale, or rye alone or in combination with annual ryegrass, crimson clover, rape, or another brassica are good choices. If you need fall forage, consider adding forage oats to your mix and harvest or graze early November. Apply lime during the winter according to your soil test results.

Follow the spring harvest or grazing with weed control if still needed and summer annuals. You can choose forage sorghum, sorghum/sudan, sudangrass or pearl millet, depending on your needs. After your second harvest, burn down the regrowth with a herbicide and plant your new perennial grass mixture. Fall is also the time to apply your phosphorus and potash as directed by your soil test. You should apply nitrogen or manure to meet the needs of the annual crops per soil test results.

Moving forward, avoid overgrazing, and if haying, leave at least four inches of stubble. Haybines should not be so low as to scalp your fields. Please keep in mind grass stores its energy reserves in its lower stem, not its roots.

For further information, contact your local extension offices regarding forage species adapted to your area, soil testing, and herbicide and fertilizer recommendations.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS

MASCD President Bruce Yerkes, Lori Flook Bishop and Dee Price

MASCD Executive Director Jen Nelson and J. Scott Shank, III

Washington County Soil Conservation District (WCSCD) received recognition during the Awards Banquet at the MASCD 2021 Annual Meeting in Cambridge, MD, August 1-3, 2021.

WCSCD was honored to receive this years Outstanding Newsletter Award.

Four WCSCD Supervisors were acknowledged for their years of service, and presented with Supervisor Recognition Pins. John Rinehart received his 10-Year pin for year 2020, as well as, Janet Stiles Fulton a 5-Year pin, J. Scott Shank, III a 10-Year pin, and Harry Strite a 15-Year pin for year 2021.

Thank you and Congratulations!

Thank you for reading!

If you know of someone who would like to receive our newsletter, or you have a submission for us to consider in future editions, please email:

Elmer Weibley
District Manager
elmer@conservationplace.com

Or

Lori Flook Bishop
Administrative Assistant
lori@conservationplace.com

During the August Board Meeting, Harry Strite and the Board of Supervisors recognized Administrative Assistant, Lori Flook Bishop, in appreciation of Five Years of Dedicated Service with WCSCD.

District Board Meetings

Held the 2nd Wednesday of each month, unless otherwise scheduled and noted on the posted Agenda.

Agenda is posted on our website.

(Open to the Public)

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Washington County Soil Conservation District

Anyone wishing to participate in the meeting, must e-mail Elmer Weibley, District Manager at Elmer@conservationplace.com to receive an email invitation. Requests for an invitation must be received by 7:00 p.m., the day prior to the meeting date.

Washington County Soil Conservation District

Board of Supervisors

Harry E. Strite, Chair
John D. Rinehart, Vice Chair
J. Scott Shank, III, Treasurer
Janet Stiles Fulton, Supervisor
Edward C. Wurmb, D.V.M., Supervisor
Boyd Michael, Associate
J. Tyler Harp, Associate
Kirk E. Winders, Associate

District Staff

Elmer Weibley, District Manager
Denise Price, Urban Program Director
Lori Flook Bishop, Administrative Assistant
Mark Kendle, Engineering Technician / Urban Plan Reviewer
Roger Thomas, District Engineer

MDA Staff

Ginger Noble, Agriculture Resource Conservation Specialist III
Kristina Stair, Agricultural Resource Conservation Specialist II
Jay Duell, Soil Conservation Engineering Technician
Chris Burch, Soil Conservation Engineering Technician

NRCS Staff

Brent Cammauf, District Conservationist
Hans Kefauver, Soil Conservationist
Derek Hanes, Soil Conservation Technician
Brad Michael, Area Resource Conservationist
Sabrina Albright, Program Assistant
Micah Murry, WMRC&D Technician

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Office Hours:
Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(Closed for Holidays)

To: