



CONSERVATION MATTERS

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood MD 20855
301-590-2855

December 2009, Issue 14

A publication of the Montgomery Soil Conservation District

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Since 1997, Maryland's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has helped thousands of Maryland landowners plant streamside buffers, establish wetlands, protect highly erodible land, and create wildlife habitat while providing them with a steady, dependable land rental income. CREP is a state-federal partnership that makes it easy for farmers to protect their streams without hurting their bottom line. The new CREP program has been simplified and offers more financial incentives to encourage landowners to establish grass and forest cover on their marginal cropland and pastureland.

The goal of CREP is to protect the wetlands, streams, and waterways that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Many of the areas along streams may lay wet or present challenges for farming. CREP is a great opportunity to get permanent cover on these areas for water quality protection and wildlife habitat. Here are some of the benefits to landowners:

- Steady rental income, equal to the Soil Rental Rate (SRR) plus up to an additional 200% of the SRR
- One-time signing bonus of up to \$200 an acre
- Up to 87.5% cost-share for most practices
- One-time incentive payment worth 40% of the total cost for installing certain practices
- Healthier conditions for livestock
- Cleaner, healthier waterways



CREP forest buffer project with livestock, exclusion fencing and a new watering trough for the animals.



Winter Equine Seminars

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) is partnering with USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maryland Extension, and the County's Department of Economic Development-Agricultural Services Division to host two equine seminars this winter. Both events are scheduled to start at 6:30 p.m. and will be held at the Agricultural History Farm Park, 18410 Muncaster Rd Derwood, MD. There is no cost to attend, but please let us know if we can expect you by registering with Mrs. Beth Canetti, University of Maryland Extension at 301-590-2825 or ecanetti@umd.edu.

Tuesday, February 2, 2010

(Snow Date Thursday, February 4)

- The digestive system of the horse
- Fecal egg count and parasites
- Cost-share programs in Maryland for Equine owners

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

(Snow Date Thursday, February 11)

- How to interpret soil test results and recommendations
- How to select quality hay
- Pasture weed identification

WEED OF THE MONTH:

Japanese Stilt Grass *Microstegium vimineum*



Japanese Stilt Grass was first introduced into the U.S. in the early 1900's as it was commonly used as packing material for porcelain being shipped from overseas. It is native to Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, and India. It is an annual plant that sprouts in the spring and grows through the summer months. The plant can reach a height of 2-3 feet. Japanese Stilt Grass has lance shaped, pale green leaves and produces thin stalks with tiny flowers in late summer followed by fruits called achenes.

Japanese Stilt Grass is a colonial species that spreads during the summer and fall by rooting at stem nodes that touch the ground. Individual plants may produce 100 to 1,000 seeds that fall close to the parent plant from both self-fertilizing and cross-fertilizing flowers. Seeds may be carried by water currents during heavy rains or moved in contaminated hay, soil, or potted plants, and on footwear and vehicles. Stilt Grass seed can remain viable in the soil for five years or more, and germinates readily.

Japanese Stilt Grass can be found in 16 eastern states from New York to Florida. It grows on stream banks, floodplains, emergent and forested wetlands, uplands, roadside ditches, lawns, and gardens. Stilt Grass threatens native species as it spreads to form dense patches. It can also change soil chemistry and shade out desirable plants. White-tailed deer may facilitate the spread of Japanese Stilt Grass as they tend to feed on native plants, avoiding the Stilt Grass. It is able to thrive in usually unfavorable conditions such as low light conditions or infertile soils.

There are several methods of management for Japanese Stilt Grass. Manual removal of the plant can disturb soil allowing seeds to sprout and the germination of new plants. If this method is to be

used you should pull plants late in the summer, but before seed heads have formed, so that new ones won't have time to germinate. You may have to pull plants for several years before the seed bank is exhausted. You may also mow late in the season. Mowing too early may allow the Stilt Grass to re-grow. The use of herbicides leaves the plant in place and the soil undisturbed. Heavy infestations of Japanese Stilt grass can be managed with a systemic herbicide such as a glyphosate. Some research has shown that the pre-emergent herbicide imazapic can be used to control Stilt Grass if applied in March in the Mid-Atlantic States. **CONTACT YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL PESTICIDE USE REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Information obtained from "Plant Invaders of the Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas" by the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Also from the National Park Service website <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/factmain.htm>

Stream Crossings, the good, the bad and the ugly....

This fall, the issue of farm accessibility has certainly become front and center for many of us in the Montgomery County agricultural community. Two best management practices that can lend assistance to the task of navigating one's acreage are stream crossings and farm access lanes. Their names pretty well define their purpose on the farm and as for their conservation component; having proper stream crossings and access roads can reduce erosion and prevent nutrients from entering local streams, local rivers and ultimately the bay. These practices can be utilized by farm equipment, customers, and livestock depending on the situation.

Stream crossings in our area can be broken down into three types; culverts, bridges and fords. Many considerations go into what type of crossing works best for any given site and situation. Some of the things to consider are: Who or what will be using the crossing? What size is the stream? How large is the drainage area above the stream crossing? What are the stream bank characteristics, i.e., are they flat or steep. What designation does the stream have in the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)

stream designation categories? If it's a class three trout stream, acquiring a permit may require a more restrictive design. And yes, you heard that right, most stream crossing sites in Montgomery County do require permits from both MDE and Montgomery County Permitting Services. Surprise, surprise!

The economics are also a big consideration. On a large stream it might cost \$20,000 or more to install an adequate crossing. For more reasons than just the cost it is wise to build it strong enough to withstand all of the stream flow that will come its way.

If you have any accessibility projects in mind for your farm, the MSCD is available to work with you in achieving your goals. We can assist with the planning and design, and will work with your contractor to insure that the project is properly built. We can also help you navigate through the permit process to make sure that all of the necessary permits have been obtained. In addition, we would be happy to see if your project qualifies for Federal or State conservation cost share programs, to help defer some of the costs. Feel free to contact us at 301-590-2855 if you have any stream crossing or access lane projects in mind.



A culvert stream crossing, watering trough and stream fencing in Damascus, MD with CREP streamside forest buffer.

SPRING CERTIFICATION FOR THE 2009-2010 COVER CROP

Spring kill-down or suppression of Cover Crops may not occur before **March 1, 2010** unless the operator plans to plant an early season vegetable crop. An operator who chose the "early season vegetable" option must plant the vegetable crop by February 29, 2010 and the spring kill-down or suppression of the

cover crop may occur as early as February 15, 2010. For the traditional cover crop program there should be **no application of nutrients** to the crop.

Options for end of winter management include green chopping (for on-farm use only), plowing under, or killing by using a burn-down herbicide. Grazing of a cover crop does not qualify as an acceptable spring kill-down method. A spring spot check will occur from a list of participants generated by the MACS office to verify compliance and accuracy of information. Spot checks will occur sometime between February 15 and March 1, 2010.

Within two weeks of the kill-down or suppression of the cover crop, but no later than **June 2, 2010**, the applicant must certify to the SCD that the cover crop has been suppressed or killed down. The final cost-share payment will be determined by the number of qualified acres which have met **all** of the program requirements.

Nutrients from any source shall not be applied to any commodity cover crop before March 1, 2010 with the exception of Potash and Lime applied in accordance with a nutrient management plan.

At the time of Spring Certification the applicant must have submitted their Annual Implementation Report (AIR) to the MDA Nutrient Management Program for the previous calendar year in order to meet the nutrient management cross-compliance guidelines. No Spring Payment will be issued until this reporting form is on file with Nutrient Management. All tax account numbers that were fall certified must be included in either the NMP or the updated AIR.

EQIP for the Chesapeake Bay

Recently, the Lancaster Farming newspaper printed an article that described the concerns of Virginia farmers in reference to the proposed EPA takeover of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup. Many of the farmers were quoted saying that the new rules would cause significant financial hardship for their farm operations. It appears that one of the documents that will be needed to demonstrate compliance with the proposed regulations is an up to date soil conservation and water quality plan.

.....Continued on last page

2009 Cooperators Dinner Montgomery Soil Conservation District



The MSCD 2009 Cooperators Dinner was held on September 3rd at William F. Willard Farm in Poolesville. About 150 people attended the dinner, including several local and state policy makers. The Willard Farm provided an excellent opportunity for guests to see new and innovative aspects of agricultural production in Montgomery County. The Willards own a large grain operation and an agricultural services business. In attendance were County Executive Isiah Leggett, Councilmember Mike Knapp, Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance, and USDA/NRCS, State Conservationist, Jon Hall.

Participants enjoyed a variety of presentations during the event. Doug Tregoning from Montgomery Cooperative Extension provided everyone with some interesting facts about agriculture in Montgomery County. There were two representatives from the Department of Economic Development-Agricultural Services Division: Kristin Fisher and Jeremy Criss. Kristin presented information on her Cover Crop Research and Jeremy shared information on the County's Deer Donation Program. Travis Green from Willard Agri-Services gave a presentation on precision agriculture technology and equipment.

During the dinner, Dr. Robert Kratochvil from the University of Maryland provided a presentation on Innovations in Agriculture. Dr. Kratochvil is an Associate Professor and Extension Specialist in Agronomic Crop Production. He detailed some of the important agricultural research being conducted in Maryland to help reduce nutrient and sediment loads to the Chesapeake Bay and to improve efficiencies for farmers.



Doug Tregoning from Montgomery Cooperative Extension provides information on interesting agricultural facts.

The evening was capped off by recognizing Montgomery County farmers for their contributions to agriculture and conservation.



Billy Willard and County Executive Isiah Leggett

The 2009 Volunteer of the Year Award went to Ortha Levant. Ortha has provided assistance in the Close Encounters with Agriculture program for many years. Over 2,500 4th grade students participate in this program every year and she assists in the Environmental Track.

The Cooperator of the Year Award was presented to Dr. Lonnie Luther of L&M Farm. L&M Farm has implemented a variety of Best Management Practices to protect natural resources and improve their facility. Dr. Luther has installed a stream crossing for livestock, exclusion fencing, watering facility, a heavy use area, waste storage facility, a roof runoff system, and waste water treatment strip. He also used CREP to establish a riparian forest buffer along a section of the stream that transects his property.



MSCD Chairman, George Lechlinder presented the 2009 Cooperator of the Year Award to Dr. Lonnie Luther.

Maryland Department of Agriculture, Secretary, Buddy Hance presents a Secretary's Citation to Dewalt Willard



The 2008 Contribution to Agriculture Award was presented to Dewalt Willard. The MSCD recognized Mr. Willard for his lifelong commitment to improving agricultural production and conservation in Montgomery County and throughout the state. Through innovation and research, Mr. Willard helped to advance the no-till farming system with the integration of liquid fertilizer applications. Willard Agri-Service has also been a leader in nutrient management, pest management, and precision agriculture. The HighQ program uses GPS tracking devices and onboard computers in planters and combines to help farmers make productive and profitable decisions about their operations. Precision agriculture helps to reduce the nutrients applied, which helps protect the Chesapeake Bay.

Mr. Willard and Dr. Luther also received special recognition from the MDA Secretary Buddy Hance, and the NRCS State Conservationist, Jon Hall. The event was a great opportunity to celebrate contributions the Montgomery County agricultural community has made to the industry and to conservation.



The MSCD would like to offer special thanks to all of our sponsors and those that helped make the Cooperators Dinner such a success: Marchwicki Excavating Co., William E. Barnes Excavating, Chesapeake Green Fuel, Laytonsville Landscaping, MidAtlantic Farm Credit., Butler's Orchard and the staff of William Willard Farm.

THE AGRICULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION HAS TWO ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

County Executive
Ike Leggett and
Agricultural
Services Manager
Jeremy Criss
present farmer
Drew Stabler with
a farm sign
bearing the
County's
"Agricultural
Producer" logo at
the press event
announcing



Montgomery County's achievement of 70,000 acres of farmland in preservation. The agricultural preservation easement on one of Mr. Stabler's farms helped the County to achieve this goal.

The Pride of Montgomery County: Agricultural Producer Metal Sign - The metal signs measure 30"x36" and have space for the individual farm's name as seen in the photograph, above. The vinyl adhesive stickers that are custom printed for each farm name must be ordered in bulk for the best possible price. The Agricultural Services Division would like to put together an order for customized stickers for producers who are interested in having their own sign. The cost of the metal sign is \$45 and the additional cost for the customized sticker will be determined once an order has been put together. A limited number of signs are available.

20th Anniversary of Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve Poster



Copies of the poster, which was created to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Agricultural Reserve, measure 18"x24" and are available from the Agricultural Services Division for \$12. Limited quantities are available. If you are interested in purchasing a poster or a metal sign, please call Kristin Fisher at (301) 590-2805.

EQIP (continued)

Most of our farmers in Montgomery County have conservation plans and are actively applying the conservation practices that are agreed to in their plan. Some of the existing plans do not address every acre of the farm or the operation may have changed. With the continued focus on cleaning up the bay, this may be a good time for producers to meet with the MSCD staff to review and, if necessary, revise their conservation plans. Perhaps a change in grazing or pasture management is in order. Or a producer may be considering an improvement in nutrient or pest management for more accurate placement of nutrients or pesticides. There are many management activities that will result in improved economic or aesthetic conditions on the farm.

As producers consider their options, please remember the Environmental Quality Incentive Program or EQIP. EQIP has incentives for improved pasture management, nutrient management, and conservation practices such as grass waterways, diversions, stream fencing, watering systems, animal waste storage structures, improved irrigation systems, tree planting, and many others. These practices may be cost-shared up to 75%. Some conservation practices are also eligible for additional cost-sharing funding through the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share program. That is a significant factor in reducing the final installation cost of conservation practices.

Agriculture continues to be an important land use in Montgomery County and we want our farmers to be profitable. The MSCD is here to assist you in your efforts to manage the natural resources on your property. Our staff will be glad to meet with you to review your plan and revise it if necessary and we can help you apply for conservation cost-share programs. Please give us a call at 301-590-2855.

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD 20855-1421



Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD 20855

(Please tri-fold, seal and return)

Let Us Know If We Can Help You!

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District provides technical assistance for a variety of conservation practices free of charge. In addition, the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS) may pay up to 87.5% of the installation cost of these practices for qualifying landowners:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste Storage | <input type="checkbox"/> Grassed Waterway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Riparian Buffer | <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Cover Crop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversion | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Border |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Use Area Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Filter Strip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roof Runoff Mgt System | <input type="checkbox"/> Stream Fencing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trough or Tank | <input type="checkbox"/> Strip Cropping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrient Mgt Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> Stream Crossing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Area Planting |

(fold)

If you would like to see if you qualify for cost share, want more information on these or other conservation practices, need help with developing a conservation plan for your property or updating an old plan, please mail or fax this form to us and we will contact you.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Fax to 301-590-2849

Montgomery Soil Conservation District
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, MD 20855-1421
Phone: 301-590-2855
Fax: 301-590-2849
<http://www.montgomeryscd.org>

**You Can Receive
This Newsletter by EMAIL!!!**

Enjoy a full color version emailed to you
as soon as it is posted to our website.
Register for our email group by calling
301-590-2855 or emailing to
Karen.Walker@montgomerycountymd.gov

Montgomery Soil Conservation District

Staff

David C. Plummer, District Manager
J.G. Warfield, District Conservationist
Karen Walker, Administrative Aide
Melbaliz Santiago, Soil Conservationist
Paul Meyer, Engineering Technician
Brian Taylor, Resource Conservationist
Eddie Franceschi, Equine Resource Conservationist
James Harne, Conservation Planner II
Vacant Position, Conservation Associate

MSCD Board of Supervisors

George E. Lechluder, Chair
Robert Butz, Vice Chair
Wade F. Butler, Treasurer
Robert Stabler, Member
Pam Saul, Member
Allen Belt, Associate Member
Robert Butts, Associate Member
Tim McGrath, Associate Member

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status.