

# CONSERVATION QUARTERLY



KENT SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*Helping landowners protect soil and water quality since 1938.*

[kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org](http://kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org)

Find us at



Kent Soil and Water Conservation District

Janet Sigler, Editor

## THANK YOU!

**Robert Baldwin, District Manager**

Hardly a day goes by without hearing a significant news story about Chesapeake Bay or one of its major tributaries. One day it's good news, the next day, not so good news,....rinse and repeat....

So instead of continuing the monotony of the glass half full/half empty news cycle, I'm choosing a different path to start 2024 and a very simple one at that, it goes like this, THANK YOU!!

Thank you to all the farmers and landowners in Kent County who continually support the efforts to improve soil resources on land they own and/or operate and protecting water quality. Thank you to our county, state and federal elected officials for providing the political support to implement a voluntary, incentive-based business model and programs. Thank you to the Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland Department of Agriculture and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for providing the financial and human resources as well as technical expertise to operate our District. Thank you to our dedicated staff for working with the farmers and landowners in Kent County deciphering the alphabet soup of acronyms, turning the word salad of enviro/techno/bureaucratic speak into plain English, and untangling the spaghetti mess of complicated program rules in a way that is understandable to the layperson. Finally, thank you to the District Board of Supervisors for working tirelessly to provide the local structure and bringing all the "partners" together with the common goal of improving soil resources and protecting water quality in Kent County.

*"Thank You" continued page 3...*

## MEET OUR BOARD

**Charles Miller**, Chairman

**Lewis McDonald**, Vice Chairman

**Timothy Redman**, Treasurer

**William Langenfelder**, Supervisor

**W. Frank Barnes, Jr.** Supervisor

**Eddie Taylor**, Associate Supervisor

**George Kendall**, Associate Supervisor

**Sean Jones**, Associate Supervisor

**James Miller**, Associate Supervisor

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## STAFF DIRECTORY

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**Nancy Metcalf**, District Conservationist

**Michael Boughner**, Engineering Technician

**Christopher Davidson**, Civil Engineer Technician

**Jesse Downey**, Soil Conservation Technician

**Jenny Lee Freebery**, Conservation Planner

**Kelsie Fronheiser**, Conservation Planner

**Shelly Gsell**, Administrative Assistant

**Sam Leaverton**, Conservation Planner

**Ronald "Jason" Merrick**, Soil Conservationist

**Chris Myers**, Engineering Technician

**Janet Sigler**, Administrative Assistant

Main Line: Office (410) 778-5150 x 3

<https://kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org>

## SAVE THE DATE

February 6-7, 2024 Delmarva Soil Summit:

<https://delmarvasoilsummit.com/>

MDA Annual Implementation Report: Due  
March 1, 2024



## NRCS SIGN-UP OPPORTUNITIES

By Nancy Metcalf

Applications for NRCS programs are accepted anytime throughout the year with sign-up cutoff dates established for funding selections. This year's 2024 sign-up cutoff dates have been set.

**Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)** program sign-up cutoff is January 26, 2024. AMA is limited to new or upgraded irrigation systems with a maximum funding of \$50,000.

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)** round 2 sign-up cutoff is February 16, 2024 and round 3 cutoff is April 5, 2024. The following practices are either new or revised: Waste Storage Facility practices for Satellite Waste Storage Facilities and Composted Bedded Packs; High Tunnel Systems can now include raised beds; Pre-fab Livestock Shelter Structures and Soil Carbon Amendments.

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program Organic Transition Initiative (EQIP-OTI)** sign-up cutoff is February 16, 2024.

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** sign-up cutoff round 1 February 16, 2024 and round 2 April 5, 2024. Funding is in partnership with the Million Acre Challenge promoting soil healthy techniques.

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** sign-up cutoff April 5, 2024.

**Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)** sign-up cutoff January 12, 2024.

For more information on NRCS programs contact Nancy Metcalf (443-282-3280) or Jason Merrick (443-282-3289)

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**University of Maryland Extension Kent County:**  
Dwayne Joseph, PhD: (443) 480-8369

**DNR Forest Service:** Andrew Amoruso and Shaun Creasey: (410) 819-4121.

**Kent County Weed Control:** Jim Calao: 410-841-5920 or Jim.Calao@Maryland.gov

### Important Links:

<https://www.farmers.gov>

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/md/home>

**Maryland Department of Agriculture**

**Conservation Resource Newsletter:**

[https://mda.maryland.gov/resource\\_conservation/Pages/default.aspx](https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/default.aspx)

**Bird Flu Biosecurity and Nutrient Management Practices and Manure Transport Permits:**

<https://news.maryland.gov/mda/bird-flu-blog>

Contact Howard.Callahan@Maryland.gov or (410-279-4003) for questions.

**Spotted Lanternfly: Maryland Department of**

**Agriculture - (410-841-5920) or**

[dontbug.md@maryland.gov](mailto:dontbug.md@maryland.gov).

**2022 Maryland Department of Agriculture**

**Annual Report:**

[https://mda.maryland.gov/pages/annual\\_reports.aspx](https://mda.maryland.gov/pages/annual_reports.aspx)

## TAX DEDUCTIONS & CREDITS

**IRS Publication 225 - Farmer's Tax Guide** offers acceptable deductions and refunds for farm land conservation. *Always consult your tax professional.*

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p225.pdf>

**The Maryland Income Tax Subtraction Modification for Conservation Equipment** offers an allowable

subtraction from farmers' taxes for purchasing conservation equipment. Come of our office or go to

[https://mda.maryland.gov/resource\\_conservation/documents/taxsubtraction.pdf](https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/documents/taxsubtraction.pdf)

## UPDATE YOUR RECORDS

### Farm Service Agency

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file to our office. You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a Trust, LLC or other legal entity.

FSA and NRCS program participants are required to promptly report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and to update their Farm Operating Plan on form CCC-902.

To update your records, contact your Kent County USDA Service Center at 410-778-5353.



As we look forward to 2024, we are grateful for our supervisors for their dedication to conservation and wise counsel over the years.

**Charlie Miller**, Chairman : 19 years

**Lewis McDonald**, Vice Chairman: 15 years

**Tim Redman**, Treasurer: 26 years

**W. Frank Barnes**: Supervisor: 9 years

**Bill Langenfelder**, Supervisor: 9 years

**Eddie Taylor**, Associate: 33 years

**George Kendall**, Associate: 29 years

**Sean Jones**, Associate: 15 years

**Jim Miller**, Associate: 2 years

**Alice Mason**, Associate: 2 years

### *"Thank You!" continued...*

Like any good thank you note, there should be a reason for writing it. In this case, it's for results, and the results are in. While Kent County is the smallest county in Maryland, in both land area and population, our partnership continues to produce big results. For over 75 years Kent Soil and Water Conservation District has been a leader in implementing soil conservation and water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs). For the past several years, the Kent County partnership has done some great work in implementing Best Management Practices.

Structural BMP's Installed: (Number/Statewide County Ranking)

2020 21/#4

2021 23/#4

2022 34/#2

Acres of Cover Crop Planted: (Acres/Statewide County Ranking)

2019/2020 59,958/#2

2020/2021 56,542/#2

2021/2022 57,534/#2

We can't wait to see the final numbers for 2023. So, a well-deserved THANK YOU to all!

## VERIFICATION YEAR-END UPDATE

By Tina Stevens, MDA Verifier

In 2023, the Verification Team for MDA made great strides toward helping Maryland meet the 2025 goals for nutrient and sediment reduction in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Certainly 2024 will be an important year to help meet these water quality improvement goals. Verification consists of mapping and inventorying BMP's, or Best Management Practices on farms to ensure they are in place and functioning properly. Last year in Kent County, 56 parcels were visited by staff and verified as meeting standards. The most common BMP's in Kent County are grassed waterways, filter strips and conservation cover. There are many benefits to installing and maintaining BMP's such as keeping soil in place, controlling erosion and improving water quality. Conservation practices such as these benefit everyone and help with the goal of preserving our treasured Bay. Thanks to those of you who already have BMP's in place and maintain them! Contact the Kent SCD office if you would like to learn more about installing BMP's on your farm.

## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN KENT COUNTY

By Erin Stiede, Biologist

NRCS has an increase in funding for wildlife-related projects. These are projects in crop fields, fallow lands, or forests to help create and manage habitat for wildlife species. We focus on habitat projects to produce long-term recovery of wildlife.

Some popular projects are forest thinning and buffer management



for Northern Bobwhite, White-tailed Deer, and Wild Turkey.

Northern Bobwhite, commonly known as Bobwhite Quail, is an iconic species for grasslands, forests, and farmland across the southeastern US. However, populations have declined dramatically in the last 40 years. Habitat restoration across large areas is needed to restore populations. Wild Turkey can also benefit from the habitat created for quail. Some popular management tools to get cost-share on is Brush Management, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, Habitat Plantings, Prescribed Burning, etc.

White-tailed Deer is a species that has hunters excited all over the country. Kent County and the surrounding areas have some of the top scoring deer in Maryland, coming from grassland habitats. Placing cover that also incorporates food can be beneficial for deer all-year round. This can be creating buffers along your farm fields, turning a field into a grassland, or thinning your woods to encourage understory growth. Some tools offered by NRCS that can help manage habitat for deer include Brush Management, Habitat Plantings, and Prescribed Burning.

If you are interested in learning what programs can help you manage and create habitat for wildlife on your farm, contact our Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, Erin Stiede at [estiede@quailforever.org](mailto:estiede@quailforever.org) or 920-680-1981 and set up a site visit today!

## DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE SHADOWS?

A “shadow” is high school or college student interested in agriculture that spends time in our office learning what we do. Do you know someone that may be interested? Call our office to make arrangements.

## KENT COUNTY'S MID-SEASON COVER CROP UPDATE – Fiscal Year 2024

Fall Applications: 108  
Certified Area: 58,624.70  
Eligible Area: 58,444.6  
Estimated Payments: \$966,808.50

In fiscal year 2023, we had 107 applications, 108,862 certified area and paid \$2,590,434 in the spring.

If included in your MDA Cover Crop Agreement, there is still opportunity to increase your dollar/acre payment with the Extended Season Incentive. Delay kill down after May 1 offers an additional \$15 per acre for fields planted prior to November 5th. Please notify the SCD office by April 15th to make your intentions known. A planner will perform a site visit. Delayed kill down does not apply to fields planted November 6–November 15.

Planting green done prior to May 1 will receive the regular cover crop payment only. Planting green may occur after May 1 to receive the delayed termination incentive. Please see page 5 of the MDA Cover Crop Agreement.

Report all kill down by June 3, 2024.

[https://mda.maryland.gov/resource\\_conservation/counties/FY2024- CC-ProgramRequirementsandAgreement.pdf](https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/counties/FY2024-CC-ProgramRequirementsandAgreement.pdf)



Charlie Miller, Board Chairman, congratulates Shelly Gsell for 25 years with Kent Soil.



## WETLAND RESTORATION

Kelsie Fronheiser, MDA Planner

Wetlands provide a variety of benefits to both humans and wildlife and are the most diverse ecosystem in the continental United States but are unfortunately the most threatened habitat in the country. The benefits of wetlands include moderating flooding by retaining excess water during rain events, protecting shores from wave action, collecting sediment runoff, recharging groundwater reserves, and acting as a natural filtration system by absorbing nutrients and chemicals from the water. Wetlands provide nursery and other essential life cycle habitat for a variety of fisheries species, vital rest stops for migratory shorebirds, and habitat for a large array of native species. They are valuable in mitigating climate change, as both the plants and soil sequester and store large amounts of carbon. Lastly, wetlands offer us areas for water recreation, fishing, hunting, and aesthetic value.

It is estimated that historical wetlands covered approximately 215 million acres across the continental United States, but less than 100 million acres remained by 1990. In Maryland, 73% of wetland acreage has been lost since the industrial revolution. Until the 1985 Farm Bill, which included the Swampbuster provisions, wetland loss was mainly attributed to agricultural conversion, but since 1985, it is mainly attributed to development. The destruction of wetlands leads to consequences such as increased flooding and erosion, lower water quality, loss of habitat, and declines of wildlife populations and/or extinction of species.

Fortunately, efforts have been made in the past several decades to protect and restore degraded wetlands. As a landowner or agricultural producer there are several ways to lead the charge in maintaining, improving, creating, and restoring wetlands.

*“Wetland” continued...*

The Kent Soil and Water Conservation District offers three best-management practices (BMPs) for the benefit of wetlands: Wetland Restoration, Wetland Creation, and Wetland Enhancement. Wetland Restoration is our most common wetland BMP, which involves the return of a wetland and its functions on a former or degraded wetland site to its historical condition.

Because of the threatened status and high value of wetlands there are a variety of both state and federal cost-share programs that offer very high (up to 100%) cost-share opportunities to implement wetland BMPs on agricultural land. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) offers the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program which pays for 100% of the construction costs for wetland restoration and wetland creation practices. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) contract cost-share programs include the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program, in which private land is purchased by NRCS and entered into a permanent or 30-year wetland easement with 50-100% of restoration costs covered, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), in which payments are made to the landowner to co-cost-share wetland practices. Additionally, enrollment in the Farm Service Agency (FSA)’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) provides co-cost-share for the construction of the wetland project, as well as yearly rental payments per acre and includes a 200% incentive payment.

Wetland BMPs work best on marginal agricultural land with frequent flooding and ponding. If you have a wet area in your crop field or pasture that is saturated or inundated for 14 consecutive days during any part of the growing season, it’s likely you have a former wetland area that is eligible for wetland restoration. Give us a call to see how our office can help you benefit wetlands today!

*“Wetland” continued top of page...*

## SOIL EDUCATION- IT'S NOT DIRT

By Jenny Freebery

This fall conservation planners Jenny Lee Freebery and Kelsie Fronheiser taught several soils lessons to Kent County High School students in Jen Kuhl-Depp's agriculture and natural resources classes. The top take home message is soil is not dirt- dirt is what you track onto a freshly cleaned carpet when you forget to wipe your shoes. Soil is the amazing medium that grows the vast majority of what we eat, as well as helps plants, serves as a home for animals, and provides many ecosystem services like nutrient cycling and carbon storage. Students learned about what are the components of soil, how soils are formed, and how to identify different layers in a soil profile. Then the class went outside and had a chance to get their hands dirty by auguring into the ground and seeing the changes in color, texture, and other properties. They learned that in a handful of healthy soil there are more organisms than there are people on this planet- most of these organisms are microscopic fungi or bacteria, but some larger visible ones like insects, earthworms, and plant roots. We practiced texturing soils and learned how to use the ribbon test to see the amount of clay in a sample. We used pin flags to test for compaction. The students left class with messy hands, and a better appreciation for what is under their feet!





## RESTORING AMERICA'S NORTHERN BOBWHITE: HOW PRESCRIBED FIRE IS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

By Kyle Magdzuik, Tall Timbers' Game Bird Biologist

The firebird, or better known as the northern bobwhite, is a softball sized, ground dwelling game bird whose mere existence depends on frequent disturbance; disturbance most commonly caused by appropriately timed and scaled fire. Frequent fire promotes native warm season grasses, forbs, shrubs, minimizes woody species, and exposes bare ground, all of which are essential throughout the bobwhite lifecycle. Believe it or not, entire landscapes shaped by frequent fire once dominated the continental United States. Changes in land use ultimately suppressed the use of fire as a management tool. Suitable habitat for bobwhite and other native wildlife species quickly diminished with the suppression of fire contributing to the significant decline in wild populations.

### Fire As a Management Tool

Prescribed fire is arguably the most effective management tool that can be used to restore and maintain habitat suitable for quail. The seasonal timing of fire, frequency and the scale at which it occurs is critical for a list of species not limited to just quail, but includes many species of threatened or endangered song birds. Fire that occurs during the growing season every 1-2 years, maintains grass and forb dominated communities promoting a tremendous amount of biodiversity for wildlife to nest in, raise young, forage, and stay hidden from predators. Additionally, the consistent use of fire aids in neutralizing the spread of invasive species. The size or scale of an area burned is also crucial. If an area is too large, it temporarily increases the distance needed to access a variety of cover and forage types. Applying fire strategically at the right time and scale will create a mosaic across a property and help maximize usable space.

### Tall Timbers Pioneering Efforts

Tall Timbers, a research station and land conservancy, headquartered in Tallahassee, FL, is

*"Prescribed Fire" continued...*

known for exemplary land stewardship through the research, outreach, and applications of prescribed fire for northern bobwhite restoration. Research that began nearly 100 years ago conducted by Herbert Stoddard on Tall Timbers, shed light on the tremendous importance of prescribed fire to wildlife and plant species. These efforts have developed into a quail expansion program with the primary goal to increase opportunity for outdoor recreation on public and private lands by expanding habitat for fire-dependent species like quail. This expansion has produced success on more than 80,000 acres of wild quail lands on properties ranging in size from 600-6,000 acres as far west as the East Texas piney woods, and most recently north to the working lands of the Delmarva Peninsula. Already, several land stewards across the Delmarva region possessing the northern bobwhite restoration objective have entrusted Tall Timbers to assist with identifying the most limiting factor(s) on their property and develop a specific management plan with step by step recommendations to address those limitations.

### A Success Story in Kent County

One specific property in Kent County has partnered with Tall Timbers for several years now. They have been intensively restoring the habitat by working with their farmer to renovate habitat strips through agricultural fields, and controlling invasive plant species using prescribed fire, chemical and mechanical applications. However, it doesn't stop there. This property also incorporates other Tall Timbers recommendations such as supplemental feeding specific rates throughout the year and meso mammal predator trapping throughout trapping seasons. These practices, without mentioning the benefits for non-game species, are critical for supplementing much needed energy requirements quail need during the nesting season, help them make it through the over-winter period, and increase the chances that more nests will be successful, meaning more quail on the landscape.

*"Prescribed Fire" continued next column...*

*"Prescribed Fire" continued page 8...*

*"Prescribed Fire" continued...*

The stewards of this property continue to see success year after year with more than 1 quail per 3 acres of habitat estimated using this year's fall census data!

**Join the Movement!**

Interested in contributing to this conservation success? Kyle Magdziuk at Tall Timbers is ready to help. He and can guide landowners in using prescribed fire and other methods to restore essential habitat for northern bobwhite and other wildlife. The efforts of Tall Timbers and their partners demonstrate a beautiful blend of science and stewardship, proving that with the right approach, we can bring back the northern bobwhite and enrich our natural landscapes.



Jen Richardson bids  
Kent Soil farewell.

JOKE JUNCTION

What do you call 2 ducks & a cow?  
Quackers and milk.

What did the horse say after it tripped?  
Help! I've fallen and can't giddyup!

What do you call an angry carrot?  
A steamed vegetable.



WITH HEART FELT SYMPATHY

**Margaret Newcomb Hendrickson:** February 4, 1926–September 22, 2023

**Robert C. Everett:** March 22, 1942–October 12, 2023;  
Hickory Lane Farm and Florist Store

**Betty Louise Ervin:** November 16, 1934–December 20, 2023

**Phillip Lee Redman:** August 1, 1946–December 19, 2023

*Always in our memory. Forever in our hearts.* ❤️

JENNIFER RICHARDSON'S PROMOTION

Jennifer Richardson started with our office in June 2007. Through hard work and dedication we have seen her shine as she stepped up to take additional responsibility. USDA noticed and promoted her to Farm Bill Program Specialist for the Conservation Reserve Program (CSP) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) in Delaware.

Congratulations Jen and thank you for your service to Kent County's farmers. You are already missed,



2023 Office Holiday Party

From back left Shelly Gsell, Chris Myers, Michael Boughner, Jason Merrick, Jesse Downey, Tina Stevens (MDA), Nancy Metcalf, Robert Baldwin

Front left to right: Jen Richardson, Jenny Freebery, Liz Jamison (NRCS), Kelsie Fronheiser, Janet Sigler



**WORLD'S BEST LASAGNA**

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/23600/worlds-best-lasagna>

1 pound sweet Italian sausage  
3/4 pound lean ground beef  
1/2 cup onion, minced  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 (28 ounce) can of crushed tomatoes  
2 (6.5 ounce) cans tomato sauce  
2 (6 ounce) cans tomato paste  
1/2 cup water  
2 tablespoons white sugar  
4 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped & divided  
1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil leaves  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt, divided  
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning  
1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

12 lasagna noodles  
16 ounces ricotta cheese  
1 egg  
3/4 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced  
3/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Brown meat, onion and garlic over medium heat. Add tomatoes and water. Season with spices. (2 tablespoon parsley, 1 teaspoon salt with other spices.) Simmer for 1.5 hours.

Bring large pan of salted water to boil. Cook lasagna noodles. Drain and rinse with cool water.

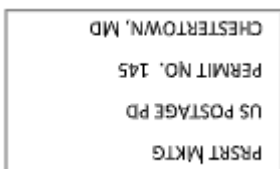
Combine ricotta cheese and egg in a bowl. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt and 2 tablespoon parsley.

To assemble in 9x13 baking dish: Layer meat sauce, noodles, meat sauce, noodles then ricotta cheese mixture. Then top with mozzarella cheese. Add final layer of meat sauce and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25 minutes covered with foil then 25 minutes uncovered.

Spray foil with cooking spray to avoid cheese sticking.

**ADDRESS CHANGE OR REQUEST E-NEWSLETTER - EMAIL [JANET.SIGLER@MARYLAND.GOV](mailto:JANET.SIGLER@MARYLAND.GOV)**

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In cooperation with

