

CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

KENT SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Helping landowners protect soil and water quality since 1938.

kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org

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Janet Sigler, Editor



COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Ronnie and Gail Dierker

By Jenny Freebery, MDA

On April 5th we honored our 2023 Cooperator of the Year, Blueberry Hill Farm's Ronnie and Loretta Gail Dierker. Ron has lived his whole life on a farm. His grandfather Henry Richard Dierker came from Germany to Rock Hall to grow corn and tomatoes. His father Arthur Dierker worked at Remington Farms. Today Ron operates over 400 acres of rented land to grow row crops using 100% no till and mixed species cover crops. He cares for many best management practices such as shallow water developments, ponds, CREP filter strips, switchgrass and pollinator plantings. Gail does a lot of the office work, helping to keep the operation running smoothly. The farm is named both for the Fats Domino song, and for the blueberries they planted near their farmhouse. In addition to work on the tractor, Ron also sells seed for Pioneer Seed along with David Hill. Ron's favorite part about farming is "playing in the dirt" and "working in God's country". He is passionate about finding ways to improve the soil and keep the water clean.

It is always a delight having Ron come into our Soil Conservation District office. His big smile and sense of humor brighten the day of all of our staff.

At the dinner he received awards from MDA by Secretary Kevin Atticks, NRCS by State Soil Conservationist Suzy Daubert, the Kent County Commissioners by Commissioner Albert Nickerson, and our office by the board of the Kent Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

Many of Ron and Gail's friends and family attended including several of their adorable grandchildren. Over 200 people came to celebrate the night at Red Acres Farm in Worton.

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There were oysters on the half shell, tours of the greenhouse, delicious appetizers, a BBQ dinner, and farm fresh Lockbriar and Daughter ice cream for dessert. A silent auction was held for the Wickes Westcott Memorial Scholarship fund to help students in Kent County who want to pursue degrees in agricultural, environmental, or natural resources fields. People left with door prizes from local businesses and the flower arrangements on the table from Wildly Native Flower Farm. A sincere thank you to all of our sponsors and donors who helped make this event possible!



Three generations from left: Dan, Ronnie & Arthur Dierker



Ronnie & Gail Dierker & Kevin Atticks, Secretary of Agriculture



Grandpa & Grandchild



Ronnie & Gail Dierker & Albert Nickerson, Commissioner



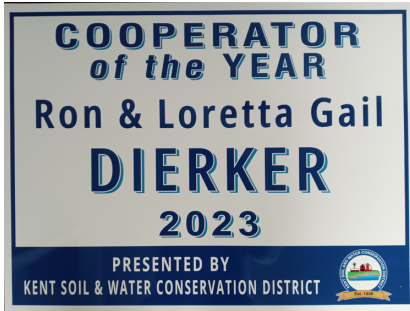
Dierker Family & Frank & Kay Barnes



Ronnie & Gail Dierker & Suzy Daubert, State Conservationist



Ronnie & Gail Dierker & Kent Soil & Water Conservation Board



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR DINNER

MARYLAND'S 5 MILLION TREES INITIATIVE AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

by Haley Rhodes, Tree Planting Specialist for Maryland Forest Service

Did you know that the State of Maryland is working toward a goal of planting 5 million native trees across our small state by the year 2031? This effort, known as the “5 Million Trees for Maryland” initiative, is a result of the 2021 Tree Solutions Now Act (HB 991). The initiative is our state’s pledge toward the global 1 Trillion Trees Campaign.

In an effort to meet today’s challenges of increased development pressure and climate change, the State of Maryland has made a historic investment in expanding tree planting opportunities for Marylanders. There are a range of programs to assist landowners and community groups with tree planting projects of any scale, and the Maryland Forest Service has a team of regionally-assigned specialists who can work with you to identify the appropriate funding and technical assistance. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved with the 5 Million Tree Initiative, be it through tree planting, tree maintenance, or seed collection.

The 5 Million Trees initiative is approaching an exciting milestone of having accounted for nearly half a million tree plantings - 471,890 to be exact - since the initiative’s conception in July 2021. The plantings are part of a multi-agency effort coordinated by the Maryland Department of the Environment, which tracks progress on the initiative. A full progress report from 2021-2023 can be found on the initiative’s website. Maryland Department of Natural Resources planting programs have resulted in 321,000 trees - or about two out of every three planted as part of the initiative. Nonprofits, civic groups, private organizations, and other state agencies have also contributed towards the overall goal.

Are you interested in getting involved with the 5 Million Trees initiative?

5 Million Trees continues top of page...

5 Million Trees continues...

Our dedicated team is eager to work with you and your community group. For questions, or to get in touch with your local specialist who can help assess your property’s tree planting potential, please email Haley Rhodes, Tree Planting Specialist for eastern Maryland at haley.rhodes@maryland.gov or Isaac Whitmore for all other regions at isaac.whitmore@maryland.gov



JOKE JUNCTION

What do you call a cow after she has given birth?
Decaffeinated.

Why is rabbit farming a terrifying profession?
Every day is a hare-raising experience.

Why don't cows understand what you say?
Because it goes in one ear and out the udder.



Thanks Robert for another successful Cooperator of the Year celebration.

APPLYING FOR FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS

Federal Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, contact your Kent County USDA Service Center at 410-778-5353 ex 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

WITH HEARTFELT SYMPATHY

Andrew MacNamara Pons: May 31, 1953–January 2, 2024
Belle Grove Farm

Wayne Thieme: March 14, 1962–January 22, 2024

Morton “Tony” Gibbons–Neff III: April 26, 1939–January 26, 2024

William S. Sutton: August 21, 1933–February 15, 2024
Bittersweet Farm;
Supervisor of Kent Soil & Water Conservation
District for 28 years.


Herman E. Bedwell: June 15, 1957 - February 16, 2024;
Loving husband of Julie Bedwell, FSA Employee

L. Wayne Bryden: July 27, 1937–February 24, 2024;
Rock Hall farm.

Ellen Louise Van Culin: February 12, 1942 -March 6, 2024; Massey farm

Wayne M. Wright: August 23, 1941–April 8, 2024

John L. “Jack” Wright: December 7, 1939– April 9, 2024

Always in our memory. Forever in our hearts... 



In January, we had the pleasure of having Kate Ervin as our intern. While here she joined Jenny Freebery on site visits and surveyed a field with Jesse Downey. Her family are crop farmers in Crumpton.

As a junior at Bryn Mawr, she is studying environmental studies, and looks forward to working in the field of conservation.

**FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA -
COMMUNITY AWARD**

On February 23, 2024 Kent County High School's Future Farmers of America held their annual awards dinner. Jenny Freebery and Kelsie Fronheiser were honored with their Community Service Award. Throughout the year Jenny and Kelsie participate in mock interviews, teach agricultural lessons, and participate in Ag Day. Well done Jenny and Kelsie!



LANDOWNERS' RESOURCES

Life happens. Animals get injured. Brush needs to be burned. Building materials end up in the Chester River. Perhaps a deer has caused crop damage. Here are a few contacts for help.

The **Maryland Department of Natural Resources'** offices:

- Deer crop damage permits: Rick Walls- 410-928-3650.
- Nuisance, sick or injured animals: 877-463-6497.
- River Pollution: DNR Police-410-260-8888
- Fishing & hunting licenses: 410-758-5252

The **Health Department:** Brush and tree burning permits-410-778-1350.

Planning & Zoning: Agricultural Preservation, Building Permits, Code Enforcement, Electricians & Plumbers Registration, Environmental Preservation, Erosion & Sediment Control, Floodplain Management, Forest Conservation, Geographic Information Services, Historic Preservation, 410-778-7423.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

University of Maryland Extension Kent County:
Dwayne Joseph, PhD: (443) 480-8369; Craig McSparran, Nutrient Management - 410-991-3114.

Maryland 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

Bird Flu Biosecurity and Nutrient Management Practices and Manure Transport Permits:
<https://news.maryland.gov/mda/bird-flu-blog>
410-279-4003.

Spotted Lanternfly: Maryland Department of Agriculture - (410-841-5920) or
dontbug.md@maryland.gov.

2022 Maryland Department of Agriculture Annual Report:
https://mda.maryland.gov/pages/annual_reports.aspx

BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION TILLAGE

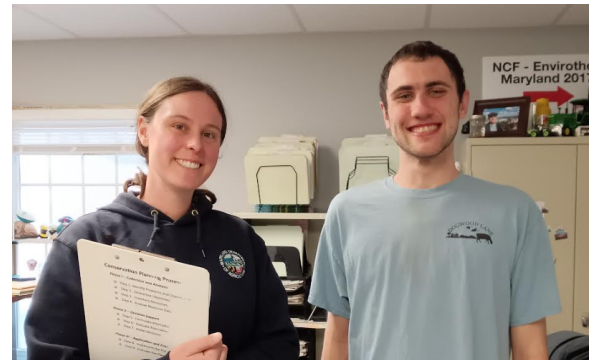
SARE's "Managing Cover Crop Profitability"
Pages 44 , 45 and 61

- Reduced soil & wind erosion.
- Provides crop residue increasing soil organic matter.
- Aids in early season weed control.
- Increased availability of water for crop production.
- Improved soil quality.
- Reduced labor and time.
- Improved air quality.

COVER CROP CALCULATORS

The Delmarva Soil Summit was held on February 6 and 7 in Salisbury. The below calculators were offered by the Northeast Cover Crop Council. Dana Rushovich, USDA’s Maryland State Agronomist, recommends to confirm all rates with your local office.

The calculators may also be found at <https://northeastcovercrops.com/decision-tool/>

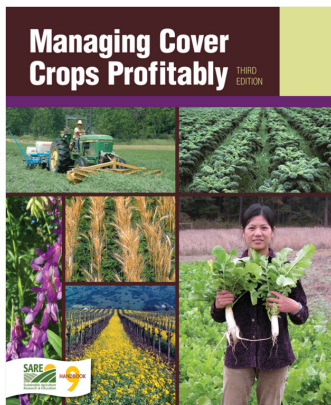


Paul Myers, from Dogwood Lane Farm in Worton is our spring intern. While here he is performing farm visits with Jenny and learning processes to create a conservation plan.

In May, he is graduating from Chesapeake College with his Associates in Applied Science with a focus in agricultural production. His plan is to increase profitability on the family farm by streamlining processes. It is great to have him here!

Another excellent cover crop reference is “Managing Cover Crops Profitability”. It is part of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education’s (SARE) Handbook Series Book 9, Edition 3. This reference covers the benefits of cover crops , selecting the best cover crops, managing pests with cover crops, crop rotation and more. Here is the link to the pdf version.

<https://www.sare.org/wp-content/uploads/Managing-Cover-Crops-Profitably.pdf>



BENEFITS OF COVER CROP

SARE’s “Managing Cover Crop Profitability”

- Creates soil organic matter that retains moisture.
- Root systems protect water quality by preventing soil erosion and helps to retain phosphorus.
- Root system breaks up subsoil compaction.
- Legumes aids in nitrogen fixing improving soil fertility and releases nitrogen when plant dies.
- Reduces weed and pest pressures while reducing costs for herbicides and pesticides.
- Enriches soil fertility as green manure.
- Legumes encourages population of mycorrhizal fungi needed for binding soil aggregates.
- Increases soil diversity and number of soil organisms.

OVEN-FRIED CHICKEN WITH PEACHES AND BISCUITS

<https://www.cooks.com/recipe/hd9ao6g9/oven-fried-chicken-with-biscuits.html>

Cut-up 2.5 to 3 pound broiler fryer chicken, set aside.

- 1/4 cup shortening
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup Bisquick baking mix
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups Bisquick baking mix
- 1/2 cup water
- Whole cloves
- 1 (16 oz.) can of peach, halved, drained

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Melt shortening and butter in 9 x 13 baking dish. Blend 1/2 cup baking mix, salt, paprika and pepper; coat chicken pieces. Place chicken, skin side down, in shortening mixture. Bake, uncovered, 35 minutes. Insert a clove in each peach.



Stir 2 cups of baking mix and the water into a soft dough. Gently smooth dough into a ball on a floured board. Knead 5 times. Roll dough until 1/2 inch thick. Cut dough with floured 2 inch cutter. Turn chicken, pushing pieces to one side of pan. Spoon excess fat from pan. Place biscuits in single layer next to chicken. Arrange peach halves on top of baked chicken. Bake 15 minutes longer or until biscuits are light brown and chicken is tender.

ADDRESS CHANGE OR REQUEST E-NEWSLETTER - EMAIL JANET.SIGLER@MARYLAND.GOV

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