



CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM | 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# Extending our Reach and Impact for Clean Water, Healthy Soil, and Climate Solutions





# AT A GLANCE | FISCAL YEAR 2023 INVESTMENTS IN CONSERVATION



Cover Crop and  
Cover Crop Plus Grants  
1,295 Contracts



MACS Cost-Share Grants  
for Conservation Practices  
344 Contracts



Manure Transport Grants  
358,840 Tons of  
Manure Transported



Manure Injection Grants  
53 Contracts



Conservation Reserve  
Enhancement Program (CREP)  
59 Contracts



Bonus Payments for CREP  
Enrollment or Reenrollment  
2,744 Acres Enrolled/  
Reenrolled



Conservation  
Buffer Initiative  
43 Stream Buffer Projects



Low Interest Loans  
3 Contracts



Small Farm and  
Urban Agriculture





## DEAR FRIEND OF AGRICULTURE,

Helping farms of all sizes protect and enhance the soil and water resources that support healthy foods and a healthy environment is a top priority for the Conservation Grants Program. In Fiscal Year 2023, hundreds of Maryland farmers used our grants to install a range of water quality, soil health, and climate-smart practices.

Protecting the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries remains a key focus. Maryland farmers used our grants to plant 395,000 acres of traditional cover crops during the 2022-2023 planting season. The planting prevented 2.7 million pounds of nitrogen and 3,160 pounds of phosphorus from entering Maryland waterways. In addition, cover crops help build climate resilience by removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

Maryland's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was popular with Maryland farmers interested in protecting local streams and creating wildlife habitat by planting trees, creating wetlands, and taking highly erodible land out of production. Farmers installed 59 CREP projects in nine Maryland counties during the year.

Our Manure Management Program helps farmers comply with nutrient management regulations

and protect local water quality. In Fiscal Year 2023, Maryland farmers transported 358,840 tons of manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels. In addition, manure injection grants totaling \$413,877 were used by dairy and livestock farmers to prevent nutrient runoff and reduce odors and greenhouse gas emissions.

Projects funded through the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program were popular with Maryland farmers looking to control soil erosion, manage manure resources, and comply with federal and state environmental regulations. During the year, MACS provided \$7.2 million to install 344 projects across the state.

Finally, I am happy to report that our new Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Program is up and running and working to bring this vital audience into the conservation fold with grants specifically designed for their operations.

Please read on to learn more about our extended reach and impact in Fiscal Year 2023.

Kevin Atticks, D.C.D.  
Maryland Agriculture Secretary

## CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRESS

Our conservation grants are used to help farmers install conservation practices on their farms that meet Maryland's Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. In Fiscal Year 2023, Maryland farmers who received these grants invested \$281,056 of their own money into projects that will prevent an estimated 2.9 million pounds of nitrogen, 37,261 pounds of phosphorus, and 20,695 tons of soil from entering Maryland waterways. The program is delivered by the state's 24 soil conservation districts with technical guidance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. The chart shows MDA grant-supported practices that help Maryland meet its nutrient and sediment reduction targets.



*Our grants help farmers protect local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.*

### CHESAPEAKE BAY CLEAN-UP PROGRESS THROUGH JULY 2023\*

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE	2025 GOAL	2022-2023 MILESTONE	2023 PROGRESS	PERCENT TOWARDS MILESTONE
Cover Crops (traditional)	478,391 acres	478,391 acres	395,003 acres	83%
Manure Transport (wet tons) Alternative Use or Out of Watershed	97,366 tons	97,366 tons	72,758 tons	79%
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE	2025 GOAL	2022-2023 MILESTONE	2023 PROGRESS	PERCENT TOWARDS MILESTONE
Exclusion Fencing (acres of buffers)	1,867 acres	1,565 acres	1,248 acres	78%
Grass Buffers	43,706 acres	39,147 acres	32,762 acres	84%
Off-Stream Watering Without Fencing	12,730 acres	12,730 acres	46,037 acres	362%
Retirement of Highly Erodible Land	33,171 acres	30,263 acres	31,443 acres	104%
Streamside Forest Buffers	20,274 acres	19,046 acres	21,539 acres	113%
Waste Storage Structures (livestock)**	99,654 animal units	91,880 animal units	88,662 animal units	96%
Waste Storage Structures (poultry)**	1,798,116 animal units	1,713,932 animal units	1,711,000 animal units	100%
Wetland Restoration	13,620 acres	11,896 acres	13,107 acres	110%

\*In some instances, progress includes practices installed with funds from both MDA and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

\*\*One animal unit = 1,000 lbs. of live animal weight



## 2023 FUNDING SUMMARY

Conservation grants help Maryland farmers finance water quality improvement projects on their farms, invest in sustainable agricultural practices, reduce carbon emissions, and comply with environmental requirements.

This program is funded by general obligation bonds, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund. A range of federal grants are used to finance highly valued best management practices (BMPs) included in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay restoration plan.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the program provided Maryland farmers with approximately \$35.1 million in cost-share grants to install 2,495 conservation projects on their farms to prevent soil erosion, manage crop nutrients, build climate resilience, and protect water quality. Grants cover up to 100% of eligible costs to install more than 40 best management practices.



### CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM SUMMARY | FISCAL YEAR 2023

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS	NO. OF PROJECTS	FUNDS
<b>MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE (MACS) PROGRAM</b>		
Total Approved from State Funds	398	\$ 9,970,825
<b>Completed Projects</b>		
CREP Projects with State Funds	59	\$ 400,441
All Other Projects with State Funds	246	\$ 6,021,225
With Federal Funds	39	\$ 781,444
<b>Total Capital Projects Completed</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>\$ 7,203,110</b>
<b>MARYLAND COVER CROP PROGRAM</b>		
Traditional Cover Crop	1,275	\$24,202,888
Cover Crop Plus	20	\$ 446,876
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,295</b>	<b>\$24,649,764</b>
<b>MANURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</b>		
Manure Transport <sup>1</sup>	467	\$ 2,046,206
Manure Injection	53	\$ 413,877
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>\$ 2,460,083</b>
<b>ECOSYSTEM INCENTIVES PROGRAM</b>		
CREP Incentive Payments	288	\$ 321,918
Conservation Buffer Initiative	43	\$ 448,353
<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>\$ 770,271</b>
<b>SMALL FARM &amp; URBAN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM</b>		
Small Acreage Cover Crop Program	5	\$ 3,757
<b>Total Projects Completed</b>	<b>2,495</b>	<b>\$35,086,985</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS</b>		
	<b>NITROGEN</b>	<b>PHOSPHORUS</b>
Estimated Pounds of Nutrients Removed by Capital Projects	180,112	34,101
Estimated Pounds of Nutrients Removed by Cover Crops	2,725,523	3,160
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,905,635</b>	<b>37,261</b>
	<b>TONS OF SOIL</b>	<b>ACRES OF LAND</b>
Tons of Soil Saved Per Year <sup>2</sup>	20,695	2,228
<b>MANURE MANAGED DAILY WITH ANIMAL WASTE STORAGE STRUCTURES</b>		
	<b>TONS OF MANURE</b>	<b>ANIMAL UNITS<sup>3</sup></b>
Poultry Manure Managed Daily	156	7,728
Dairy Manure Managed Daily	86	1,452
Beef Manure Managed Daily	154	4,037
Other Animal Manure Managed Daily	3	130
<b>Total Animal Manure Managed Daily</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>13,347</b>

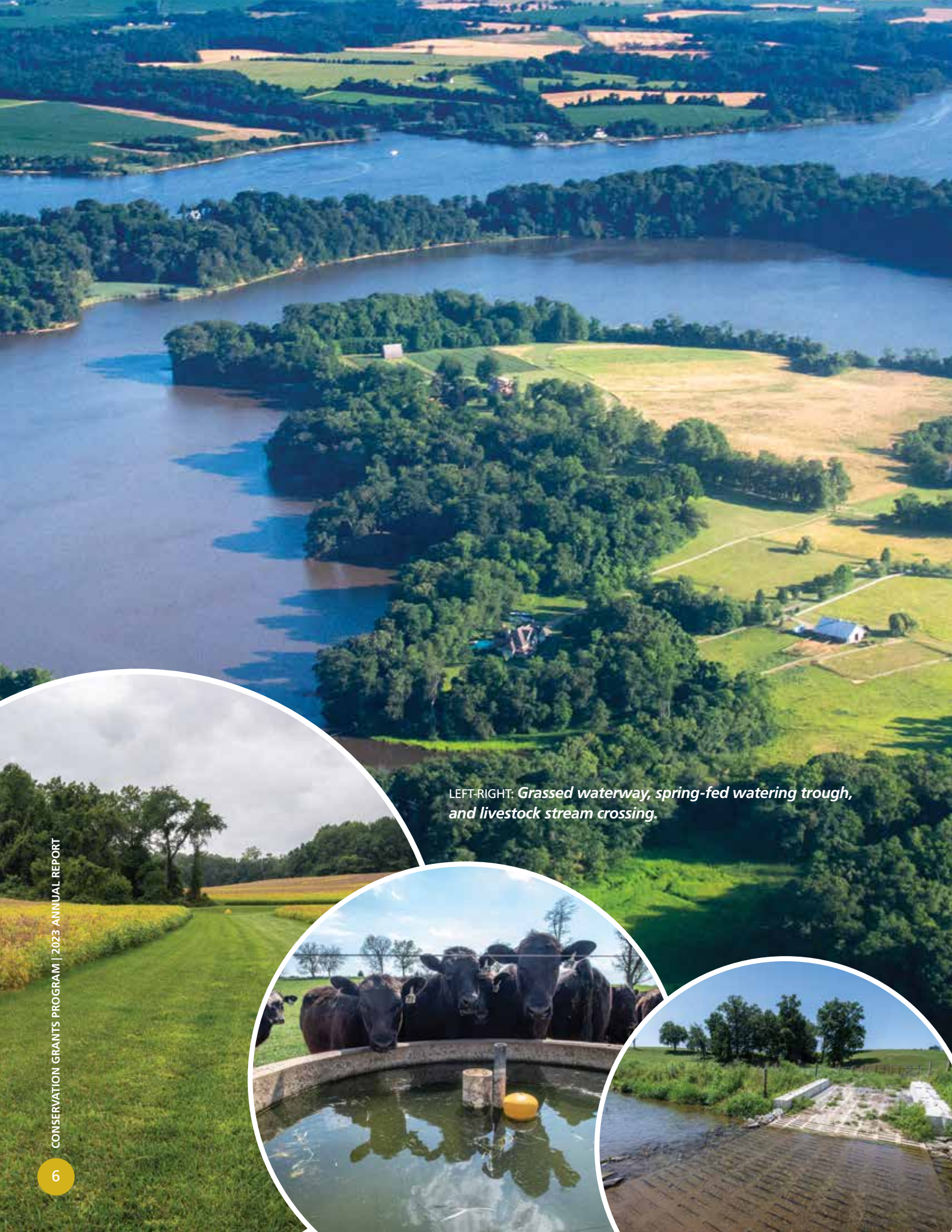
<sup>1</sup>Does not include poultry company matching funds (\$682,500)

<sup>2</sup>Based on the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE)

<sup>3</sup>One animal unit = 1,000 lbs. of live animal weight

Note: Nutrient reduction figures are based on the best information available and are consistent with the latest Chesapeake Bay Model.





LEFT-RIGHT: *Grassed waterway, spring-fed watering trough, and livestock stream crossing.*





# MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE (MACS) PROGRAM

Established in 1984, MACS has helped thousands of Maryland farmers install a range of conservation practices on their farms. MACS currently funds 40 conservation practices that help farmers manage manure, control soil erosion, fight climate change, and protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

In Fiscal Year 2023, MACS provided Maryland farmers with \$7.2 million in grants to install 344 conservation projects on their farms.

The top five practices installed during the year include grassed waterways (148), lined waterways or outlets (76), subsurface drains (43), underground outlets (43), and critical area plantings (38). *Please see center spread for a complete list of best management practices installed through the MACS program in Fiscal Year 2023.*

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUMMARY FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS   FISCAL YEAR 2023		
DISTRICT	COMPLETED PROJECTS	MACS PAYMENT
Allegany	4	\$ 27,947
Anne Arundel	2	\$ 4,976
Baltimore County	20	\$ 434,005
Calvert	2	\$ 88,950
Caroline	5	\$ 239,366
Carroll	83	\$1,622,567
Catoctin	11	\$ 228,109
Cecil	6	\$ 310,038
Charles	0	\$ 0
Dorchester	4	\$ 151,457
Frederick	31	\$ 689,081
Garrett	2	\$ 3,413
Harford	11	\$ 287,248
Howard	2	\$ 47,654
Kent	46	\$ 827,697
Montgomery	9	\$ 187,790
Prince George's	6	\$ 83,641
Queen Anne's	35	\$ 544,536
Somerset	6	\$ 58,206
St. Mary's	8	\$ 264,593
Talbot	36	\$ 672,976
Washington County	11	\$ 246,145
Wicomico	4	\$ 182,715
Worcester	0	\$ 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>\$7,203,110</b>





**PRACTICE**

ALLEGANY

ANNE ARUNDEL

BALTIMORE COUNTY

CALVERT

CAROLINE

CARROLL

CATOCTIN

CECIL

CHARLES

DORCHESTER

FREDERICK

GARRET

Animal Mortality Facility													
Conservation Cover			1			7						1	
Contour Farming													
Contour Orchard													
Critical Area Planting	1	2	1	2	1		3					12	
Denitrifying Bioreactor					2								
Diversion			1		1	1		1					
Fence	3		1			2	1					4	2
Field Border													
Filter Strip													
Grade Stabilization Structure				2	1	2		1					
Grassed Waterway			14		1	41	4	3				12	
Heavy Use Area Protection		2	2		1	7	1	1				5	
Hedgerow Planting							1						
Lined Waterway or Outlet	1		5		1	16	2	3				12	
Pasture & Hay Planting												4	
Riparian Forest Buffer						12	3					2	
Riparian Herbaceous Cover						1				2			
Roof Runoff Structure	1		1			3	2	1				5	
Roofs and Covers			1			3	2					4	
Saturated Buffers													
Sediment Basin													
Sediment Control Pond													
Spring Development						4							
Stream Crossing	1		1			1							
Strip Cropping, Contour													
Strip Cropping, Field													
Structure for Water Control					3								
Subsurface Drain			1	1	3	17	3	1				13	
Terrace System													
Tree/Shrub Establishment							1						1
Underground Outlet	1				3	14	3	2				17	
Vegetated Treatment Area													
Waste Storage Facility			1			3	2	2				3	
Waste Treatment Lagoon													
Waste Treatment Strip													
Water Well													
Watering Facility			1			4						1	
Wetland Creation											1		
Wetland Restoration											1		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>3</b>	





	HARFORD	HOWARD	KENT	MONTGOMERY	PRINCE GEORGE'S	QUEEN ANNE'S	ST. MARY'S	SOMERSET	TALBOT	WASHINGTON COUNTY	WICOMICO	WORCESTER	TOTAL FY23	TOTAL FY84-22	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
					1					1		2	1,058	1,060	
		5			1			1	1			17	721	738	
												0	47	47	
												0	2	2	
3	2			3				8				38	943	981	
												2	0	2	
1		2			1			3	4			15	553	568	
2	1		3	1						8		28	1,460	1,488	
					2							2	13	15	
												0	23	23	
		8		1	7			4	6			32	1,976	2,008	
4	1	31	5		14			4	13	1		148	5,393	5,541	
1	1			2	3	1					3	30	1,240	1,270	
												1	0	1	
2	1		5	2	6			4	16			76	552	628	
					1							5	14	19	
												17	1,580	1,597	
		2			6			1				12	229	241	
1					2				3			19	856	875	
1					2							13	59	72	
												0	1	1	
												0	51	51	
		1		1								2	1,121	1,123	
												4	1,211	1,215	
					1							4	558	562	
												0	61	61	
												0	72	72	
1								1				5	51	56	
				1				1	2			43	18	61	
												0	92	92	
												2	1	3	
								2	1			43	18	61	
												0	1,693	1,693	
2					1			1		1		16	2,414	2,430	
												0	15	15	
												0	45	45	
					1					2		3	207	210	
	1		1	1	1					4		14	2,202	2,216	
												1	0	1	
		1				5		12				19	58	77	
18	7	50	14	12	50	6	24	59	20	5	0	613	26,608	27,221	



## MARYLAND COVER CROP PROGRAM

Cover crops are important to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and the productivity of Maryland’s farmland. This program offers cost-share grants to help farmers plant cold-hardy cereal grains, legumes, and other fall cover crops following the harvest of summer crops. As cover crops grow, they recycle unused plant nutrients, prevent erosion, and improve the soil for spring crops. Cover crops also help remove carbon dioxide—a greenhouse gas—from the air and protect farm fields from too much or too little rain.

Farmers use our grants to help offset seed and planting costs for many types of cover crops, which may not be harvested for financial profit. During the 2022-2023 planting season, Maryland farmers planted 395,003 acres of traditional cover crops statewide using approximately \$24.2 million in cost-share grants. Funding for the Cover Crop Program is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

2022-2023 COVER CROP PROGRAM			
COUNTY	CONTRACTS	SPRING CERTIFIED ACRES	PAYMENT
Allegany	7	438	\$ 31,117
Anne Arundel	18	3,489	\$ 268,766
Baltimore County	32	8,046	\$ 414,912
Calvert	10	1,067	\$ 64,504
Caroline	99	29,533	\$ 1,891,455
Carroll	92	24,211	\$ 1,467,659
Cecil	75	19,451	\$ 1,285,082
Charles	22	2,800	\$ 159,784
Dorchester	80	28,933	\$ 1,416,047
Frederick & Catoclin	143	28,163	\$ 1,575,121
Garrett	17	1,603	\$ 120,768
Harford	61	13,031	\$ 853,807
Howard	12	2,573	\$ 180,853
Kent	95	54,174	\$ 3,526,313
Montgomery	27	12,216	\$ 495,851
Prince George’s	10	1,624	\$ 114,245
Queen Anne’s	116	52,749	\$ 3,340,320
St Mary’s	45	4,751	\$ 241,979
Somerset	31	8,052	\$ 484,899
Talbot	74	33,739	\$ 2,025,235
Washington County	69	9,206	\$ 585,069
Wicomico	73	21,481	\$ 1,381,461
Worcester	67	33,673	\$ 2,277,641
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,275</b>	<b>395,003</b>	<b>\$24,202,888</b>



*Cover crops provide soil health, water quality, and climate benefits.*



*Fiscal Year 2023 was a good year for CREP enrollment. The federal/state partnership program experienced significant growth over Fiscal Year 2022.*



## CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

For more than two decades, Maryland CREP has been helping landowners safeguard and enhance local waterways, protect highly erodible land, and create wildlife habitat on their property. This federal-state partnership program pays farmers and landowners to take environmentally sensitive cropland out of production for 10 to 15 years and install conservation

practices that improve water quality and provide food and shelter for wildlife. CREP is a key feature in Maryland’s initiative to plant 5 million trees by 2031 to sequester carbon and provide environmental and human health benefits. In Fiscal Year 2023, MACS provided landowners \$400,441 in grants to install 59 CREP-related projects.

### CREP PROJECTS COMPLETED BY DISTRICT | FISCAL YEAR 2023

DISTRICT	COMPLETED PROJECTS	MACS PAYMENT
Baltimore County	1	\$ 213
Carroll	20	\$127,235
Catoctin	1	\$ 15,978
Dorchester	2	\$ 1,457
Frederick	4	\$ 13,965
Garrett	1	\$ 1,794
Kent	6	\$ 21,882
Queen Anne’s	6	\$ 17,680
Somerset	5	\$ 37,325
Talbot	13	\$162,912
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>\$400,441</b>





## MANURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

This program helps farmers manage manure resources, comply with nutrient management regulations, and protect water quality in local streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

### MANURE TRANSPORT GRANTS

Maryland's Manure Transport Program helps farmers cover the cost of hauling poultry and livestock manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels. This program was established by the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998. To qualify for reimbursement, the manure must be trucked to farms or alternative use projects that can use the product safely.

In Fiscal Year 2023, Maryland farmers received \$2,046,206 in grants to transport 358,840 tons of manure to approved farms

and businesses. Delmarva poultry companies contributed \$682,500 in matching funds to transport poultry manure.

Livestock manure (dairy, beef, equine, and swine) comprised 70% of the manure transported. Dairy farmers typically use our grants to haul manure away from the barnyard area to distant fields with acceptable phosphorus levels. If soil phosphorus levels are elevated on these fields, the manure is hauled to other farms.

Poultry litter comprised the remaining 30% of the manure transported during the year. Of this amount, 61% was trucked to alternative use facilities, with the remaining 39% land applied to crops as a fertilizer on qualifying fields.

### MANURE INJECTION GRANTS

Injecting manure into the soil instead of spreading it on the surface helps prevent nutrient runoff, reduces odors and greenhouse gas emissions, and preserves beneficial surface residue. In Fiscal Year 2023, 53 contracts totaling \$413,877 in cost-share grants were awarded to offset operating costs associated with this practice.



## MANURE TRANSPORT PROGRAM PAYMENT SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR	ACTUAL TONS TRANSPORTED	MACS PAYMENT	POULTRY COMPANIES COST-SHARE PAYMENT*	TOTAL FUNDS ISSUED
FY1999	1,896	\$ 17,992	\$ 17,992	\$ 35,984
FY2000	13,366	\$ 111,464	\$ 111,464	\$ 222,928
FY2001	20,477	\$ 195,559	\$ 195,559	\$ 391,118
FY2002	47,481	\$ 434,610	\$ 420,395	\$ 855,005
FY2003	28,556	\$ 233,444	\$ 229,645	\$ 463,089
FY2004	40,755	\$ 295,356	\$ 285,806	\$ 581,162
FY2005	36,329	\$ 239,196	\$ 200,113	\$ 439,309
FY2006	69,009	\$ 380,694	\$ 293,728	\$ 674,422
FY2007	99,297	\$ 490,011	\$ 356,955	\$ 846,966
FY2008	99,817	\$ 520,357	\$ 370,985	\$ 891,342
FY2009	119,892	\$ 663,177	\$ 504,024	\$ 1,167,201
FY2010	80,899	\$ 469,398	\$ 402,846	\$ 872,244
FY2011	61,150	\$ 354,011	\$ 294,383	\$ 648,394
FY2012	35,554	\$ 297,587	\$ 283,951	\$ 581,538
FY2013	52,481	\$ 377,007	\$ 339,252	\$ 716,259
FY2014	118,995	\$ 608,259	\$ 419,929	\$ 1,028,188
FY2015	167,237	\$ 851,304	\$ 409,548	\$ 1,260,852
FY2016	213,151	\$ 954,300	\$ 447,882	\$ 1,402,182
FY2017	241,941	\$ 1,174,690	\$ 453,038	\$ 1,627,728
FY2018	249,421	\$ 1,020,910	\$ 453,876	\$ 1,474,786
FY2019	249,840	\$ 1,074,079	\$ 373,875	\$ 1,447,954
FY2020	309,374	\$ 1,382,822	\$ 455,681	\$ 1,838,503
FY2021	377,215	\$ 1,889,179	\$ 602,791	\$ 2,491,970
FY2022	402,926	\$ 2,580,681	\$ 682,431	\$ 3,263,112
FY2023	358,840	\$ 2,046,206	\$ 682,500	\$ 2,728,706
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,495,899</b>	<b>\$16,616,086</b>	<b>\$9,288,649</b>	<b>\$27,950,941</b>

\*Dairy, beef, and other livestock manure became eligible for cost-share grants in Fiscal Year 2002. Livestock producers do not receive matching funds from poultry companies.



*Farmers hauled 358,840 tons of manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels to alternative use facilities and qualifying farms.*



## HIGHLIGHTS: ECOSYSTEM INCENTIVES

<b>Tax Subtraction</b>	
Participants:	130
<b>CREP Incentive Payment</b>	
Acres Enrolled:	2,744
Total Payments:	\$321,918
<b>Conservation Buffer Initiative</b>	
Participants:	43
Total Payments:	\$448,353
<b>Cover Crop Plus</b>	
Participants:	20
Total Payments:	\$446,876
<b>LILAC Program</b>	
Participants:	3
Total Loan Value:	\$303,843

## ECOSYSTEM INCENTIVES PROGRAM

This program provides a menu of conservation incentives that promote clean water, healthy soil and climate solutions.

### CONSERVATION EQUIPMENT TAX BREAK FOR FARMERS

The Maryland Income Tax Subtraction Modification for Conservation Equipment helps farmers offset costs to buy certain types of conservation equipment to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and protect local water quality. The incentive allows farmers to subtract eligible equipment purchases from taxable income on Maryland individual and corporate tax returns. During the year, 130 farmers took advantage of the tax subtraction.

### CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP) INCENTIVE PAYMENT

This federal-state partnership program gives farmers a one-time signing bonus to take environmentally sensitive land out of production and plant conservation practices that protect soil, water, and wildlife resources. Landowners were awarded \$321,918 in signing bonuses for 2,744 acres enrolled in Fiscal Year 2023.

### CONSERVATION BUFFER INITIATIVE

This pilot program complements CREP by offering farmers and landowners attractive incentive payments to plant streamside buffers on farms to improve local water quality. The program provides features not offered by CREP including a buffer option for field ditches, flexible site management, and shorter contract terms. In Fiscal Year 2023:

- Farmers received a one-time bonus payment of \$1,000/acre to install forest buffers.
- Up to \$330/acre/year was offered to help cover costs associated with maintaining forest buffer viability and health for the first 5 years of the contract.
- Payment rates ranged from \$1,500/acre to plant grass buffers next to pastures to a maximum of \$4,500/acre to plant trees next to pastures.
- The program awarded \$448,353 in conservation buffer grants to 43 Maryland farmers.

### COVER CROP PLUS

This program pays higher incentives for enhanced cover crop implementation to encourage greater biodiversity and residue management to improve soil health. Enrolled farmers agree to grow cover crop mixes on the same field for three consecutive years, maintain a living root system, and manage the cover crop for maximum benefits. The base payment for this premium incentive program is \$125/acre per year, which can increase to \$170/acre with optional add-ons. In 2023, the program funded 20 projects for an investment of \$446,876.

### LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION (LILAC)

Low-interest loans guaranteed by the Maryland Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund help farmers install BMPs on their farms, purchase conservation equipment, and adopt new technologies to protect natural resources.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the program approved three applications for manure-handling equipment totaling \$303,843 in loans.





## SMALL FARM AND URBAN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Established in 2022, this program supports small-scale agricultural operations in urban, suburban, and rural areas. It aims to increase community access to healthy foods by providing grants to small-scale farms that typically do not qualify for traditional conservation programs due to their size or location. Its goal is to help small and urban farms enhance the natural resources that support their operations by adopting Bay-friendly and climate-smart farming practices.

### IN FISCAL YEAR 2023, THE PROGRAM:

- Provided \$3,757 in grants to support an initial fall 2022 cover crop program.
- Introduced a Small Acreage Cover Crop Program for the 2023 growing season; received 35 grant applications to support 152 acres of cover crops.
- Drafted regulations to develop a new financial assistance program authorized by the 2022 Maryland General Assembly. The program provides MDA with up to \$500,000 in annual funding through Fiscal Year 2027 to help urban farms and community gardens purchase and install equipment to access water and electricity needed to sustain their operations. The legislation was amended in 2023 to establish a statewide Urban Agriculture Grant Program.
- Exhibited at small farm conferences and workshops across the state; worked with the public affairs office to produce an educational video on urban agriculture.





# SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS DELIVER OUR CONSERVATION GRANTS TO FARMERS

Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts—with technical guidance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service—help farmers choose the right best management practices for their operations, supervise their installation or construction, and develop maintenance plans to keep them in good working order. District staff help farmers calculate costs to install practices and apply for other state and federal grant and loan programs. Best management practices are usually installed as part of a farm's overall Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan. These plans are developed for farmers free of charge by soil conservation district technical staff.

MARYLAND'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS		
Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3	alleganyscd.com
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757	annearundelscd.org
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3	bcsd.org
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3	calvertsoil.org
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3	
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3	carrollsoil.com
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3	cecilsd.com
Charles	301-638-3028	charlesscd.com
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3	
Frederick County	301-695-2803, ext. 3	catocinfrederickscd.com
Garrett	301-501-5886	garrettscd.org
Harford	410-638-4828	harfordscd.org
Howard	410-313-0680	howardscd.org
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3	kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org
Montgomery	301-590-2855	montgomeryscd.org
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3	pgscd.org
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3	
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3	stmarysscd.com
Somerset	410-621-9310	
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 5	talbotscd.com
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3	conservationplace.com
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3	wicomicoscd.org
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3	



## Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

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Aruna Miller, *Lt. Governor* | Steven A. Connelly, *Deputy Secretary*