



# Nutrient Management News

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

WINTER 2024

## Has Your Nutrient Management Plan Expired?

**TAKE ACTION NOW** March is here, and farmers across the state have begun applying nutrients to crop fields. If your nutrient management plan has expired or is set to expire this spring, you must act immediately to get your plan updated. The first step is to be sure you have current soil and—if applicable—manure samples. Soil samples are considered "current" if they are under three years old, and manure samples may be used for two years. Please get in touch with your private consultant or University of Maryland advisor to get your plan updated.



## Letter from Secretary Atticks

I'm pleased to share this update and the many exciting things that have happened since last year's Nutrient Management Summit. The University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has been working to fill vacancies in their Nutrient Plan Writing Program to increase its plan writing capacity for farmers. The Nutrient Management Oversight Committee has met to set goals for improving the program, and the Farmer Task Force has issued its recommendations for modernizing the program to increase compliance and protect local water quality. A summary of their report is in this newsletter. We opened the conversation, heard your concerns, and are working towards solutions.

Now is the time to get your soil sampled and prepare or update your Nutrient Management Plan for the 2024 planting season to ensure that you are in compliance. A current nutrient management plan is **required** for state cost-share funding. Options for compliance include using a certified plan writer or consider attending one of our monthly Farmer Training and Certification courses that will allow you to become certified to write your own nutrient management plan. Either way, be sure to complete your Current Nutrient Management Plan Certification so you have it if you need it.

In the coming weeks, the department will be sharing updates as the legislative session wraps up; we anticipate changes in regulations regarding Food Processing Residuals (FPRs). We will



*continued on page 4*

# 2024 Plan Writing Update

Following last summer's regional meetings and the July 17th Nutrient Management Summit, the University of Maryland (UMD) began evaluating ways to improve its nutrient management plan writing services. UMD has hired several new nutrient management advisors and is working to fill other vacancies. If you need a nutrient management plan, contact your county Extension Office. If your county does not have a nutrient management advisor on staff, UMD will refer you to an advisor from another county who can prepare your plan. Another option is to hire a private consultant to write your nutrient management plan. Moving forward, UMD will no longer write no-land CAFO plans. MDA conservation staff will now be writing these plans. For a list of private consultants you can hire, visit [bit.ly/NM-PlanWriter](https://bit.ly/NM-PlanWriter). Either way, you can get a head start by assembling the information your plan writer will need. Go to [extension.umd.edu/resource/anmp-farmer-resources](https://extension.umd.edu/resource/anmp-farmer-resources) for a list of required items.



## Have You Filed Your AIR?

Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) for calendar year 2023 were due March 1. Please file your AIR as soon as possible if you haven't already done so. Warning letters will be sent in mid-April to all operators who still need to submit their AIRs.

You can use the electronic reporting option available through **Maryland One-Stop** to save time. You'll need to register for an account or log into your existing account to use the e-file option.



1. Go to [onestop.md.gov](https://onestop.md.gov)
2. Browse through the state agencies for the Department of Agriculture.
3. Scroll down the list of forms and licenses for the 2023 AIR reporting form.
4. Follow the instructions to complete your report.

Paper forms were mailed to all regulated farmers in February and are available for download on the website at [bit.ly/NM-AIR](https://bit.ly/NM-AIR)

## Write Your Own NM Plan

MDA and the University of Maryland have ramped up efforts to train and certify farmers to write their own nutrient management plans. The goal is to offer **monthly** Farmer Training and Certification—including virtual sessions—as long as there is demand.

As a farmer, you understand your operation better than anyone, so it makes sense for you to become certified to write your own nutrient management plan. This process takes just three days.

- On the first two days, you'll attend a workshop where you'll learn the fundamentals of nutrient management and learn how to complete a plan.
- You'll receive take-home study materials to help prepare you for the exam. On the third day, about a week later, you will take an open-book certification exam.
- After passing the exam, you will work with an MDA nutrient management specialist or Extension advisor to develop a nutrient management plan for your operation.

You can check out our upcoming classes at [bit.ly/NMP\\_Training](https://bit.ly/NMP_Training)



# Get Certified *Local!*

Are you looking to expand your business? Check out MDA's new Certified Local Farm and Fish Program. This initiative supports local growers by encouraging state agencies and public four-year universities to purchase 20% of their food from Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers. This is an excellent opportunity for small and urban farms to create new markets. The primary requirement for the Certified Local Program is a nutrient management plan. To learn more about the program and register to become a Certified Local Farm, please visit: [bit.ly/MDA-CertifiedLocal](https://bit.ly/MDA-CertifiedLocal)



## FPRs in the News

The use of FPRs or Food Processing Residuals as a source of nutrients for cropland applications remains a contentious issue due to odor complaints from neighbors during spreading and storage.

Last year, Maryland joined a growing list of states regulating FPRs on agricultural land. The new rules—which took effect January 1, 2023—

require direct injection or same-day deep incorporation of FPRs on all cropland except hay fields.

But residents in several Maryland counties have asked for stronger regulations and permit

requirements for FPRs. In response, one or more bills have been proposed during the 2024 legislative session, which could lead to stricter regulations or permitting requirements for FPRs. MDA will provide an update on FPRs after the legislative session ends. If new requirements are passed, educational sessions will be offered to farmers who use FPRs.



## New Faces



**Craig McSparran** is the new nutrient management specialist for Cecil and Kent counties. With 15 years of experience as a private nutrient management consultant serving Kent and other Eastern Shore counties, Craig knows the turf. Previously, he worked as a University of Maryland Extension advisor serving Cecil, Kent, and Talbot counties. Craig holds a B.S. in Agronomy from the University of Maryland and a Delaware nutrient management certificate. Contact him at [craigj.mcsparran@maryland.gov](mailto:craigj.mcsparran@maryland.gov) or 410-991-3114.

## Soil Amendments Are Nutrient Sources

Are you looking for a cheaper alternative to commercial fertilizer? It's important to remember that all nutrient sources—including soil amendments—must be included in your NM plan. Additionally, soil amendments are required to be analyzed and registered with the State Chemist every January. A copy of the registration must be kept with your farm records and made available during an on-farm review. Questions? Contact your regional nutrient management specialist listed on the back of this newsletter.

### **Secretary's Letter** *cont. from page 1*

report on any regulatory changes in the summer edition of this newsletter.

Finally, our new Certified Local Program offers a unique opportunity to grow your business. The primary requirement for participation in this program is a current Nutrient Management Plan. You can read more about this new marketing opportunity in this newsletter.

With best wishes for a healthy and productive year,

**Kevin Atticks, Secretary,**  
*Maryland Department of Agriculture*

# Urban Update



### **Educational Video Offers Expert Tips for Healthy Lawns**

MDA and Extension have partnered to produce an educational video highlighting best practices for lawn care. This instructional video features lawn care expert Chuck Schuster and answers commonly asked questions about best practices for healthy lawns and cleaner streams. You can watch it on MDA's YouTube channel at [bit.ly/MDALawnCareTips](https://bit.ly/MDALawnCareTips)

### **Blackout Dates Have Ended**

- Fertilizer blackout dates authorized by Maryland's Lawn Fertilizer Law ended March 1.
- Fertilizer applications containing nitrogen and phosphorus may be resumed as long as the ground is not frozen or heavy rain is not predicted.
- A soil test is required before phosphorus may be applied to established lawns.

### **Business License Holders: Have You Filed Your Annual Fertilizer Reports?**

Annual Fertilizer Application Reports (AFARs) for calendar year 2023 were due March 1. If you still need to submit your information, please do so immediately.

E-filing is available through **Maryland OneStop**. Go to [onestop.md.gov](https://onestop.md.gov) and type in *AFAR*. Paper reports can be downloaded at [mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer](https://mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer)

Remember, a report is required even if it shows no activity. Count each area once, regardless of how many times it was fertilized, and please keep a copy of your report for your records.

### **Professional Fertilizer Applicator Exams**

The department's 2024 certification exam schedule is available on the website at [mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer](https://mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer). The next exam is scheduled for April 16 in Derwood.

### **Recertification Training**

Professional fertilizer applicators (PFAs) are required to earn 6 continuing education credits within a 3-year cycle. Our new 3-year cycle began on **January 1, 2024** and ends on **December 30, 2026**. You will need to earn 6 continuing education credits at any time during this cycle. See the training calendar on *Page 5* for recertification opportunities.

### **Questions?**

Contact [timothy.zang@maryland.gov](mailto:timothy.zang@maryland.gov) or call 410-991-3288.

# Producer Task Force Report Calls for Modernizing the NMP



A panel of producers is recommending that the Nutrient Management Program implementation changes aimed at modernizing the program.

The Producer Task Force—created by the Secretary of Agriculture—met four times between August and October 2023 to produce a series of goals for the NMP. The group evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the program and recommended ways to modernize it by incorporating the latest research and technology to increase compliance and meet environmental safeguards. Here are their goals and recommendations:

**GOAL 1** Simplify the NMP by adding flexibility for diverse producer operations and easing the minimum requirements for small operations or those that do not apply nutrients.

**GOAL 2** Increase education and outreach to producers, environmental groups, and legislators on nutrient management planning requirements.

**GOAL 3** Improve UMD plan writing efforts and increase private and producer generated nutrient management plans.

**GOAL 4** Using the latest science, revamp/modernize the NuMan Pro nutrient management planning software.

## Questions?

Read or download the full draft report at [bit.ly/MDA-TASK-FORCE](https://bit.ly/MDA-TASK-FORCE)

# TRAINING CALENDAR

## AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

### Nutrient Management Voucher Training and Recertification

<b>Dates</b>	April 16, Anne Arundel County
<b>Format/Locations</b>	Online
<b>Who Should Attend</b>	Farmers who apply nutrients to 10 or more acres of cropland are required to attend this free two-hour training once every three years.*
<b>How to Register</b>	Go to: <a href="https://extension.umd.edu/resource/agricultural-nutrient-management-meetings">extension.umd.edu/resource/agricultural-nutrient-management-meetings</a>

### Nutrient Management Self-Paced Voucher Training and Recertification

<b>Dates</b>	Available anytime
<b>Format/Locations</b>	Self-paced online course
<b>Who Should Attend</b>	Farmers who apply nutrients to 10 or more acres of cropland are required to attend this free two-hour training once every three years.*
<b>How to Register</b>	Go to: <a href="https://umeagfs.teachable.com/p/nutrient-voucher-and-farmer-certification-credits">umeagfs.teachable.com/p/nutrient-voucher-and-farmer-certification-credits</a>

**Upcoming Classes** Check back often for new classes at [bit.ly/NMP\\_Training](https://bit.ly/NMP_Training)

### Learn and Earn Continuing Education Credits On-Line

<b>Ongoing</b>	Several new on-demand webinars have been added.
<b>How to Register</b>	Go to: <a href="https://bit.ly/NMWEBINARS">bit.ly/NMWEBINARS</a>

\* Farmers who are certified to write their own nutrient management plans are not required to attend voucher training. Instead, they are required to earn 6 continuing education credits every 3 years.

## TURFGRASS NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

### Professional Fertilizer Applicator Certification Training/Exam

<b>Dates/Locations</b>	April 16, 2024, Derwood, MD   June 11, 2024, Boonsboro, MD
<b>Who Should Attend</b>	Individuals who want to take the exam to become certified to apply fertilizer to lawns that they manage. An optional training session is available.
<b>Website</b>	Go to: <a href="https://mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer">mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer</a> . Check back often for new offerings.

### Professional Fertilizer Applicator Continuing Education Classes

<b>Dates</b>	New two and six credit offerings are being planned and will be posted on the website as soon as they are finalized.
<b>Format/Locations</b>	In Person and Zoom
<b>Who Should Attend</b>	Certified professional fertilizer applicators who need to renew their certifications.
<b>How to Register</b>	Go to: <a href="https://mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer">mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer</a> . Check back often for new offerings.

### Learn and Earn Continuing Education Credits On-Line

<b>Ongoing</b>	Several new on-demand webinars have been added.
<b>How to Access</b>	Go to: <a href="https://bit.ly/NMP_Training">bit.ly/NMP_Training</a> and scroll to the bottom of the page.





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Wes Moore, *Governor*  
Aruna Miller, *Lt. Governor*  
Kevin M. Atticks, *Secretary*  
Steven A. Connelly, *Deputy Secretary*

## Maryland Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Offices and Staff Directory

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## Nutrient Management News

# 2024 WINTER

## What's Inside:

- Plan Writing Update
- Draft Producer Task Force Report Released
- Food Processing Residuals Under Scrutiny



**Maryland Nutrient Management News** is published by the Maryland Nutrient Management Program. It is designed to help farmers, consultants, and lawn care professionals comply with Maryland's nutrient management regulations. Comments and suggestions should be directed to the Maryland Nutrient Management Program, Maryland Department of Agriculture. Email: [nminfo.mda@maryland.gov](mailto:nminfo.mda@maryland.gov)

