



Maryland Department of Agriculture News



Celebrating Maryland Agriculture

December 2009

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Take the Ag Forum Survey

The 2010 Governor's Agricultural Forum will be held in February and we need your help. Please take a few minutes to [complete a survey](#) about the obstacles and opportunities that you feel agriculture will be facing in the next 15 years. This survey will serve as a baseline for the Forum as we develop a new strategic plan for agriculture. The 2006 Statewide Plan for Agriculture has been completed and implemented, click [here](#) to learn more.

First Family Cuts Local Christmas Tree

Governor Martin O'Malley, First Lady Katie O'Malley and their children kicked off their family holiday festivities by visiting [Butler's Orchard](#), a 300-acre Montgomery County family farm, and cutting their own fresh, [local Christmas tree](#). Click [here](#) for more details and a video. A few days later, he [addressed the Maryland Farm Bureau](#) during its annual convention.



"Buying locally positively impacts the local economy, the health of our environment, and the spirits of those who enjoy the sight and smell of a fresh tree this time of year. I encourage all Marylanders to buy their Christmas tree from a locally owned farm," said Governor O'Malley.

Maryland boasts more than 200 tree farms statewide with nearly 3,000 acres in active production. Last year, Maryland Christmas tree growers harvested 77,800 trees in 2007 valued at \$2.4 million. Click [here](#) for more fun facts. Click [here](#) to find a tree farm near you.

Photo: Governor O'Malley cuts First Family Christmas Tree with assistance from Wade Butler, co-owner Butler's Orchard, while First Lady Katie O'Malley and MDA Secretary Buddy Hance watch.

Secretary's Corner

Earl "Buddy" Hance

Holidays are for sharing time with family and friends, reflecting on the past, looking toward the future, and for establishing meaningful New Year's resolutions. Despite the difficult economic times, we have a great deal to be thankful for. Like most farmers, I am an optimist and know that things will get better and when they do we will be ready.

Here at the department, the MDA family continues to work hard together day in and day out serving agriculture and all the citizens of

Maryland. [Governor O'Malley](#) and I believe that public service is one of the greatest callings. We are very fortunate to have some of the most talented and dedicated state employees at MDA. The quality of their service has become more obvious than ever to me in recent months as we have asked everyone to do even more with even less and as a number of long-term employees transition into retirement. Their commitment to Maryland citizens and to agriculture is remarkable and will truly be a loss to the department.

While our recent retirees will stay close in our hearts and minds, we will be looking to new faces and ideas that will help us meet new and changing needs that we see before us. Change always creates opportunity. In this newsletter, you will read about the retirement of Doug Wilson, our head of Administration, after 36 years of service. I am pleased to announce that I've asked Jim Wallace, who previously served as fiscal administrator at MDA, to return to fill Doug's job.

For New Year's resolutions, we are looking at how we can become greener. MDA has taken great strides at its headquarters to reduce our power use, recycle more, and otherwise reduce our carbon footprint.

After 25 years of the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share (MACS) program, farmers have proven their commitment and accomplishments in protecting the Chesapeake Bay. As we move forward, farmers are building on their accomplishments by tapping into the [Buy Local](#) campaign and [farm energy audits](#), expanding [cover crops](#), [CREP](#) and many more environmentally sound programs that help in so many ways. For more ideas you can use in your everyday lives, see the New Year's resolution story to the right and check out [Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay](#).

We ask for your participation in the Governor's Agricultural Forum, which will be held in February to help chart a course for agriculture for the next

Mary Ellen Setting Appointed MDA Deputy Secretary

One of Maryland's most important agricultural and consumer protection leadership positions is now filled with the promotion of Mary Ellen Setting as deputy secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The position had been vacant since May 2009 when Governor Martin O'Malley appointed former Deputy Secretary Buddy Hance to his post as Secretary of the agency. Setting has served as Assistant Secretary of Plant Industries and Pest Management for the agency since January of 2004.

"We are very pleased to announce this appointment," said Sec. Hance. "Mary Ellen Setting's extensive experience and leadership with the agency, respect among industry professionals and her peers, as well as her common-sense approach to managing a diverse range of regulatory and service programs will be a great asset to the O'Malley-Brown Administration, the department and to the Marylanders we serve. Her vision will help guide our outstanding staff and strengthen MDA's important programs for the benefit of all Marylanders."

Click [here](#) for more information.



Cost-Share Program Celebrates 25 Years of Conservation in 2009!

This year marks our 25th year of extraordinary success in helping farmers do their part to protect water quality in the streams and rivers that feed our great Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share ([MACS Program](#)) is the cornerstone of Maryland's efforts to protect natural resources and [Governor Martin O'Malley's plan to accelerate the Bay cleanup](#).

MACS provides farmers with the financial resources they need to place innovative, state-of-the-art conservation practices on their farms that control soil erosion, manage nutrients, protect wildlife habitat and ensure the health and safety of all Maryland waterways. Farmer interest and action in protecting natural resources has reached unprecedented levels. Despite the recent economic downturn, 2009 was the most successful year on record.

In 1984, MACS provided Maryland farmers with \$434,000 in grants to install roughly 130 conservation projects on their farms. This year, MACS provided Maryland farmers with a record \$18 million in grants to install 2,300 conservation projects on their farms. Farmers who received MACS grants over the last 25 years invested more than \$14 million of their own money into these conservation projects. Such action on the part of Maryland farmers dispels the notion that conservation takes a back seat-even in tough economic times.

As Maryland ramps up its efforts to achieve even greater nutrient savings for the Bay, MACS will continue to help Maryland farmers lead the way toward a [smart, green and growing](#) future.



Survey: Consumers Support Ag

The [2010 Policy Choices Survey](#) by the University of Baltimore Schaefer Center for Public Policy found that 78 percent of Marylanders are more likely to buy produce that is identified as having been grown by a Maryland farmer. Further supporting agriculture, a full 94 percent of those surveyed said that it is at least "somewhat important" that the state preserve land for farming. Compared with last year's survey, the results showed steady support for Maryland agriculture. Additionally, the survey revealed increased understanding that growth and development and residential runoff are major threats to the Bay.



10-15 years. A [survey](#) is available for everyone to provide input in advance of the event.

Thank you for your support of [MDA](#) and for agriculture over the past year. On behalf of all MDA employees, I wish you and your family a happy, healthy and prosperous new year. We look forward to serving you for many more years to come.

[Buddy Hance,](#)
[MDA Secretary](#)

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Pesticide Container Recycling

MDA collected 21.6 tons of empty pesticide containers for recycling this year. The [free program](#) encourages proper disposal to help protect the Chesapeake Bay preventing pesticide residues from entering the soil and local waterways and has saved valuable landfill space by recycling more than 616,000 empty pesticide containers

MDA offers empty pesticide container recycling programs for farmers, golf courses, government agencies and commercial applicators. This program is paid for through special fund revenues collected from licensing and certification fees and through pesticide product registration fees.

For the past 16 years, MDA has operated an empty pesticide plastic container inspection and collection program open to the public. The pesticide containers are collected, chipped, processed and remanufactured into new pesticide containers. Click [here](#) for more information about MDA's Pesticide Regulation Program.



New Statewide Strategic Plans Proposed

Earlier this month, Governor Martin O'Malley released the details of [Maryland's Proposed Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Development Plan](#), a new multi-faceted effort to rebuild Maryland's decimated native oyster population. The plan builds on efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay and to expand oyster sanctuaries and aquaculture leasing opportunities. It is designed to encourage the development of aquaculture businesses, while continuing to support a more targeted and sustainable public oyster fishery.

The [Maryland Horse Industry Board released its final report](#) to Governor O'Malley, which provides a strategic plan to grow and improve the Maryland Horse Industry. The proposed plan is based on recommendations from the more than 300 industry leaders who attended the 2009 Maryland Horse Forum in August.

Weights & Measures - On Your Side

MDA's Weights and Measures staff were featured on the news recently highlighting two examples of the work they do on behalf of Maryland consumers. Check out [ABC2](#) and [FOX45](#) coverage. As the weather gets colder and you're shopping for the holidays, think about how Weights and Measures works for you to ensure you get what you pay for with home heating/vehicle fuels, deli scales, packaging and more. Click [here](#) to learn more about how MDA's Weights and Measures helps to protect you in your purchasing activities.



New Year's Resolution: Go Green

Why not start the New Year off by going green and saving green. Governor Martin O'Malley is offering tips for Marylanders to incorporate eco-friendly practices into holiday celebrations and into the New Year. Click [here](#) for tips to go green and save green.

And if you go out to eat, you can still go green - according to a new [survey](#) from the National Restaurant Association, the top five trends are locally-grown produce; locally-sourced meats and seafood; sustainability as a culinary theme; mini-desserts; and locally-produced wine and beer.



Nutrient Management Plan - Annual Report Reminder

Now that winter is upon us, it's a good time for farmers to take advantage of this down time and start preparing the documentation to file Nutrient Management Annual Implementation Reports, which are due March 1, 2010. Click [here](#) for more information.

Barn Raising in Allegany County

When Allegany County farmers experienced devastating barn fires this year, the community stepped in to help them rebuild. The Maryland Department of Agriculture also provided assistance with 90 percent of the needed funds through the USDA EQIP cost-share program for a Manure Storage Structure and Heavy Use Area.

[Check out the amazing video](#) of a barn being rebuilt by about 100 Amish men. They accomplished in a short period of time what would have taken the family much longer to do. On November 12 during a traditional barn-raising event, the Helmstetter barn was raised in about 8 hours (the walls, rafters, siding and roof). The walls and rafters were built on-site a day or two before, and the concrete work and flooring were done a few weeks before that.



John Helmstetter, farm owner, worked his whole life on the farm. He was honored as Conservation Farmer of the Year about 20 years ago by the [Allegany Soil Conservation District](#).

Photo: Craig Zimmermann, MDA Engineering Technician.

People Profile: Doug Wilson

When Secretary Y.D. Hance and Deputy Secretary John Cecil hired Doug Wilson in May 1973 as their assistant, the Maryland Department of Agriculture was just five months old, housed over a pet store in Annapolis' Parole Shopping Center and beginning to take shape as the State Board of Agriculture at the University of Maryland transitioned to the department. Doug, who was a recent [University of Maryland](#) graduate and self-described "arrogant little college snot," never intended to stay. He couldn't have known that 36 years later he would be looking back on a public service career that shaped the agency more than anyone else's. To understand Doug's career is to get a lesson in MDA history. One also needs to understand that public administration is in his blood. His father, Rufus H. Wilson, was deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration under President Jimmy Carter and stayed on as acting director during the opening months of the Reagan administration.



Doug came to MDA with degrees in Business and Public Administration and a stint at the U.S. General Services Administration counting kilowatt usage at all federal buildings. His measure of accomplishment was the length of his calculator tape across the office floor. His connection to agriculture came with a job at the University of Maryland as part of a Beltsville-based sheep research team for 2 1/2 years. At MDA, his first charge was to oversee the mailroom and printing operations and to create an "automated" licensing system. He quickly began absorbing more administrative responsibilities, a trend that remained consistent throughout his tenure. He feels fortunate that one of the Assistant Secretaries at the time, Dick Carter, took him under his wing and taught him about state government.

As a new agency, the department sought land where it could fulfill its mission of serving the citizens of Maryland and most particularly the agriculture community. Doug became MDA's point person for the planning, design and construction of the new headquarters building. He counts his role in this project as one of his most visible and enduring accomplishments. At the time of its completion, it was among the most modern laboratory facilities in the country.

The first conceptual plans were drawn up in 1974 while the agency struggled to find a suitable headquarters location. Initially the agency was directed to use very old buildings at the Crownsville Hospital Center. As fortune would have it, Anne Arundel County wanted the buildings. In what Doug called one of the state's "greatest land deals," the Board of Public Works quickly authorized a land swap, transferring 15 acres of county land for the MDA Headquarters in exchange for some of the Hospital facilities. What followed was a phased construction of a state-of-the-art headquarters and laboratory building. The building was completed in 1983, the same year that Secretary Wayne Cawley selected Doug to be chief of Administrative Services.

As the agency moved into its completed home, MDA began a period of growth with the establishment of the Resource Conservation Office in 1984. In this era, Doug served as the agency's legislative liaison for a period of time. He counts Jack Miller, one of agriculture's leading advocates in Annapolis at the time, as one of his mentors for teaching him the

legislative ropes. MDA grew to about 600 people, until the economic downturn during Governor Schaefer's term in the early 1990s. During this time, Sec. Cawley added the oversight of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to Doug's responsibilities.

One of Doug's greatest accomplishments and sources of pride is his role in building the agency and its facilities and growing it into something great. Each year, despite the budgetary ups and downs, expansions and contractions of programs, Doug has worked to keep "the train and all the cars going in the same direction" and has found a way for the agency to close the budget within the legal requirements. His deep understanding of the agency and his emphasis on playing out all different scenarios and "what-ifs" has helped him lead MDA through the most fruitful and the challenging times. His underlying philosophy is "to be open to a fault. Tell people what is going on because you don't know nearly as much as you think you do and need everyone's input." This is quite an evolution from the "arrogant little college snot" who didn't think he'd stick around long.

MDA, agriculture and the citizens of Maryland owe Doug a great debt of gratitude for his dedication to public service. At the department, he leaves us with so much more than a building. He reminds us routinely about the value of established policy to guide us through the issue of the day; the caution of precedent; the need for consistency, and how to consider all sides of an issue or question in 100,000 words or less. MDA is a better place because of him.

So, what will Doug do in his retirement? He's using the coming eight months to play out all the scenarios and "what ifs" to figure out how he'll divide his time among his true loves - his family, especially his wife Debbie, daughter Kristie and his grandkids, golf, and travel. The first order of business, however, will be a trip to Paris with Debbie this spring (he cancelled it last year to deal with the agency budget). One thing is for sure, if he lives his retirement with as much gusto, dedication and commitment as he has his career, the golf greens will never be the same and "Grampy" will be a frequent babysitter extraordinaire.

Caption: Doug Wilson, left, shares a laugh at his retirement party with Secretary Buddy Hance.

Featured Recipe: Solomons Island Clam Chowder

1 12 ounce can fresh shucked chowder-size hard clams (or 12 chowder-size hard clams in shell)
3 large potatoes
2 medium onions
3 carrots
3 green peppers
3 strips bacon
3 cups water
Clam liquid plus water to equal 2 cups
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
salt and pepper, to taste



Drain clams, reserving liquid. Finely chop clams; strain liquid if necessary (shuck and chop clams if in shell; strain and reserve liquid). Finely chop potatoes, onions, carrots, green peppers and bacon. Put in 4 quart pot, add water and bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 40 minutes. Add clams and clam liquid, simmer 15 minutes more. Add butter, salt and pepper. Makes 6 generous servings.

Upcoming Events

- [Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association Annual Meeting](#), January 10 (Annapolis)
- [Maryland Horse World Expo](#), January 21 - 24 (Timonium)
- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts Winter Meeting, January 26-27 (Annapolis)
- [2010 Maryland Farmers' Market Conference](#), January 29 (Annapolis)
- [Junior Rockfish Contest](#), January 30, (Ocean City)
- 2010 Buyer-Grower Meeting, January 21 (Annapolis)
- [Chesapeake Green 2010: Maryland Green Industry Symposium](#), February 3-4 (Linthicum Heights)

We invite your feedback.

Thank you for reading our latest publication. We are always looking for ways to improve how we serve our constituents. Please send your comments, suggestions and ideas to mdanews@mda.state.md.us or call 410-841-5881.

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Go Green, Buy Local this Holiday Season!

Another way to go green this holiday season and throughout the year is to buy local and support Maryland farmers. A few [farmers' markets](#) across the state are open through the month of December and continue to offer fresh, seasonal, locally-grown produce and a variety of farm-made products including holiday gift items. Consumers can also purchase a variety of meats and cheeses [directly from the farms](#) where they were produced. A Maryland wine from one of the [state's 38 licensed wineries](#), along with [fresh seafood from the Bay](#), will round out any holiday meal.

[Forward email](#)

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