

# spotlight

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A PUBLICATION FOR VOTING MEMBERS OF MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

## Ag Hall of Fame Winners



Two Maryland Farm Bureau families were inducted into the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame during the recent Maryland Agriculture Dinner in Glen Burnie. At left is the Harry Black Family of Frederick County receiving their honor from Governor Martin O'Malley.

Over 750 attended the annual Maryland Agriculture Dinner where the Earl and Jeff Griffith Family was inducted into the Governor's Agriculture Hall of Fame.



## Farm Bureau Opposes New Environmental Standing Law

By Valerie Connelly  
MFB Government Relations Director

Legislation to give environmental organizations more power to challenge permits and to pursue third party enforcement of the law through "citizen suits" has been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly. The Community Environmental Protection Act of 2009 is a priority for Attorney General Doug Gansler and the environmental community.

Under current law, a person has "standing" to challenge a permit application at the state level if he or she can demonstrate the potential to be harmed by the activity that will be permitted. In most cases, this allows a neighbor or someone near the activity to show the potential for actual harm and contest a permit or seek action in court to stop or alter the activity. Standing has generally been restricted to someone who can "see it, smell it or hear it."

Under the concept outlined by the Attorney General in H.B. 1053 and S.B. 824, the new standing rule will allow organizations to challenge permits issued by the Department of Environment or the Department of Natural Resources during the application process and for up to two years after it is issued. For farmers, this would impact permits for the following activities: MAFO/CAFO activities, water appropriation and use, pond approvals, waterway construction, non-tidal wetlands exemptions and mitigation, tidal wetlands licenses, aquaculture activities, surface mining, animal waste storage structures, sewage sludge utilization and Section 401 water quality certification (needed for spring development, ponds and livestock crossings).

Many of these permits are needed to install Best Management Practices funded through EQIP, MACS and the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund. Challenges by the organizations seeking standing will dramatically increase the cost of and time involved in obtaining

## A Visit with the New Congressman

By Kurt Fuchs  
MFB Assistant Government Relations Director

On Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, Eastern Shore county Farm Bureau leaders met with freshman Congressman Frank Kratovil at the Salisbury Cooperative Extension office to discuss current issues affecting the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District's agricultural community. The Eastern Shore county Farm Bureau presidents requested the meeting with an eye to building a strong relationship with the new Congressman and to ensure that he and his staff are aware of agriculture's critical role in the district.

The meeting was attended by representatives from every county on the Shore, including Pat Langenfelder, first vice president of MFB, and MFB staff members, Mel Hollingsworth, Dave Willoughby and Kurt Fuchs.

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# WHY I SUPPORT THE MARYLAND FARM BUREAU PAC

By Tom Browning

There are two principal activities conducted by the Maryland Farm Bureau Political Action Committee (MFB PAC). When legally and ethically undertaken, both contribute to good government and public policy decision making and both are a large part of the foundation of an active and vigorous democracy. The first purpose has been discussed frequently so I will only mention it briefly. That purpose is to improve communication between the farmers of Maryland, as represented by MFB, and the state-level elected officials and candidates. The PAC funds provide MFB with the means to more effectively reach out to elected officials and candidates to explain our positions on the issues that are important to us and to determine and evaluate their support for those positions. In return for their support, MFB, through the PAC, has the means to assist them in their re-election or election, either through an endorsement and/or a financial contribution to their campaign. In this way, MFB can identify and assist in electing officials whose issue positions are more closely identified with ours. This, in turn, greatly facilitates and simplifies the task of the MFB governmental affairs staff in achieving our legislative and regulatory policy objectives.

The second major activity is the training of potential candidates on the nuts and bolts of campaign management or, more simply, a "How to Win an Election" course for farmers and planning and holding

"Farmers For" events and activities to support local candidates that don't involve PACs. The first training program is appropriate for individuals that are planning or considering running for election to a state or local political office. This can include possible candidates for election to school boards, county councils or commissioners, and even state-level offices. The information provided is on how to identify and frame the important issues, build a sound campaign organization, raise money and bring supporters to the polls on election day. To be useful, such training must be undertaken well before the campaign season begins. MFB PAC expects to offer this course in the fall of 2009 for the 2010 election.

The purpose of the "Farmers For" course is to train local farmers to form and successfully operate support and advocacy groups for a candidate or candidates. Such groups will not act as PACs that directly raise and contribute money to a candidate's campaign coffers, but function as entities that conduct separate and independent activities, such as newspaper ads, door-to-door campaign literature distribution, etc. that benefit their chosen candidate. For the 2010 election this course will likely be offered in February 2010.

A successful legislative and governmental affairs program requires an effective elected official/candidate communication, evaluation and rewards program and a companion training program that helps in the election of candidates that support the goals and objectives of Maryland Farm Bureau. The activities of the PAC contribute significantly in achieving that success. So, support the PAC, it is good for MFB and it is good for the farmers of Maryland.

**Take a look at [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)**

## Counties urged to get on the website

The Maryland Farm Bureau website has gone through an extensive renovation and we encourage all county Farm Bureau leaders to get on board and online. Check out the site at [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com).

From the home page you can discover all that Maryland Farm Bureau has to offer, including weekly updates on agricultural issues from Annapolis and Washington, D.C., a calendar of events and new links to AFBF sites.

Regular features on the site are a complete history of Maryland Farm Bureau and a listing of state and county leaders with contact information. You can also direct your friends and neighbors to the site for membership information and entertain your children and grandchildren with agriculture education puzzles

on the Kidz Corner page.

All of the latest Farm Bureau news can be found on the site as each of the *Spotlight* editions and weekly Hotlines are placed there. As a member you can also place help wanted or buying and selling classified ads for free. All of Maryland Farm Bureau's member benefits are also listed on the site with direct links to those companies offering their services.

Each county Farm Bureau also has its own page on the site. Many counties are already using them to communicate and we encourage all counties to get on board. This is a free service and an efficient way to spread the news about activities and honors.

Just head to the website at [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com) and check it out. If you would like to place information on the site, send it to [ssummers@comcast.net](mailto:ssummers@comcast.net).

## County Farm Bureau Membership Honor Roll

(As of February 18, 2009)

*County Farm Bureau Membership Goals are based upon Regular Members, represented in the first two columns. The last column reports the total members paid, including both regular and associates.*

County	YTD Regular Members Paid	Needed for goal	YTD All Members Paid
Allegany	82	48	106
Anne Arundel	607	332	2260
Baltimore	353	173	2991
Calvert	198	82	603
Caroline	288	94	630
Carroll	579	350	1183
Cecil	193	106	534
Charles	158	86	715
Dorchester	170	60	490
Frederick	584	317	1501
Garrett	102	81	135
Harford	329	128	1338
Howard	138	63	783
Kent	156	103	241
Montgomery	210	108	2546
Prince George's	127	100	1534
Queen Anne's	226	97	451
St. Mary's	237	108	565
Somerset	150	86	317
Talbot	198	83	480
Washington	185	93	578
Wicomico	232	109	550
Worcester	193	75	449
<b>Maryland Totals</b>	<b>5,695</b>	<b>2,883</b>	<b>20,980</b>

## A Visit with the New Congressman

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After introductions were made, Congressman Kratovil briefed the group on his committee assignments, noting he was very pleased in particular to be appointed to the Agriculture Committee because of its significant role in the Shore economy. He even told the group that there had been some discussion amongst the Ag Committee members about holding a meeting on the Shore at some point in the future. He was also appointed to the Armed Services Committee, where he feels he'll be able to support the many military personnel and their families that work and reside in the district. Rep. Kratovil let the farm leaders know that he wants to establish "consistent interaction" so that he and his staff may be kept abreast of issues facing farmers in the 1<sup>st</sup> District.

The biggest issue brought to the Congressman's attention was the latest reinterpretation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) rules by the Region 3 Office. Of major concern to the Shore's poultry farmers is the EPA's recent contention that nearly any operation with over 37,500 square foot of capacity will be considered a CAFO based on an almost universal assumption of "pollution" discharge. As such, anyone seeking a CAFO permit must submit a Notice of Intent, be covered by a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, and pay a fee ranging from \$120 for small operations and up to \$1,200 for the largest category of operations – all by the February 27<sup>th</sup> deadline. This is to say nothing of the fact that the dozen or so current CAFOs in Maryland are waiting in line to have their CNMP completed by NRCS.

Farmers expressed the very real concern that if NRCS cannot provide the resources for current CAFOs, how can the additional 1,000 or so newly qualifying operations be expected to be in compliance by February 27<sup>th</sup>? The Congressman was disappointed that the rules of the game seemed to have been changed so close to the deadline and expressed the need for reasonable and fair solutions to these types of issues. He agreed to go straight to the source and investigate the issue further with EPA as well as the Maryland Department of Environment. In fact, his office has already followed up with MFB staff regarding the issue and continues to do so.

Other issues broached during the informal meeting were farm labor issues and the need to address the federal H2-A Visa program for foreign agricultural workers. Bob Arnold of Queen Anne's County Farm Bureau stressed the need for a viable, consistent and user-friendly program to ensure the agricultural community's labor needs, especially those with labor intensive crops, can be met. Rep. Kratovil recognized the fact that the two extreme approaches to our nation's immigration issues must be reconciled with a compromise somewhere in the center. He told the group that a revamped H2-A program must first make it easier to play by the rules and only then will it be appropriate to address abuses in the system.

The meeting wound down with discussion on free trade and the need for American farmers to maintain sufficient export markets for their crops and agricultural products. In particular, several farmers present highlighted wheat market restraints in Australia and Russia's recent ban on American poultry products.

Maryland farmers will continue their dialogue with the Congressman Kratovil during the March 18<sup>th</sup> Washington Drive-In.

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# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

## March

- 6 Dorchester County Farm Bureau Banquet, Suicide Bridge Restaurant
- 7 Kent County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 12 Queen Anne's County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 13 Charles County Farm Bureau Banquet, Isaac Walton League
- 14 St. Mary's County Farm Bureau Banquet and Miss Contest, Leonardtown Fire Hall Social Hall, 6 p.m.
- 18 Washington Drive-In
- 19 Worcester County Farm Bureau Banquet, Nassawango Country Club
- 20 Talbot County Farm Bureau Banquet, Easton High School
- 21 Wicomico County Farm Bureau Banquet, Sharptown Fire Hall
- 27 Somerset County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 28 Prince George's County Farm Bureau Banquet, Baden Vol. Fire Department

## April

- 2 Allegany County Farm Bureau Spring Banquet, Fairgrounds
- 4 Cecil County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 19 Cecil County Young Farmers Annual Sporting Clay Shoot
- 21 MFB Board of Directors Meeting

## July

- 14 MFB Board of Directors Meeting

## August

- 3 Miss Maryland Agriculture Orientation, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium
- 28 Miss Maryland Agriculture Contest, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium
- 28-Sept. 7 – Maryland State Fair

*(To get your county's activities listed on the calendar, please send the date, event, place and time to Susan Summers at [ssummers@comcast.net](mailto:ssummers@comcast.net).)*

## Farm Bureau Opposes New Environmental Standing Law

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permits and installing BMPs on farms.

Not only does H.B. 1053 and S.B. 824 allow environmental groups to challenge permits, it also allows them to go into court and directly sue companies, local governments and state agencies if they believe any environmental "standard or limitation" has been violated. The environmental groups do not have to be based here in Maryland. A group from the Midwest with one member here in the state could sue or challenge a permit if "a negative impact or the threat of a negative impact ... to the use or enjoyment of a natural resource ... including aesthetic and recreational values" are perceived to be harmed.

Environmental groups have been arguing for years that they want the same standing benefits available to them under federal law. A closer look shows that under the federal standing rule, a case can be dismissed almost immediately if there is no merit. Under the law being proposed in the General Assembly, the time and cost of permit compliance will be dramatically increased, with no early out for a meritless case. In fact, the bill rewards environmental challenges by allowing the prevailing party to recover all of the cost of pursuing the case. The means a company – or farmer – could be on the line for his own defense costs as well as all the lawyers and experts hired by an environmental group to bring the lawsuit.

The bottom line is that passage of environmental standing legislation gives up the state's right and obligation to fairly enforce the laws on the books and allows nongovernmental, agenda-driven organizations to decide which laws to enforce and which industries to target. The Community Environmental Protection Act is a bad idea and should be defeated.

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## Food Check-Out

The Maryland Farm Bureau Women's Committee celebrated Food Check out week at the Ronald McDonald House on February 17<sup>th</sup>. State Chairperson Evelyn Wilcom (in photo) made a \$350 donation to the leaders of the Baltimore facility that provides care for critically ill children and their families while they are in the area for medical treatment. The FBW also donated over 300 pounds of soda tabs for recycling that were donated from members throughout the state during the past year. Individual county Farm Bureau Women groups also donated canned food supplies and monetary donations to the organization. The group also donated lunch to the adult residents of Hope Lodge who stay in that home while getting medical treatment.