

spotlight

JANUARY 2009 • ISSUE 0001

A PUBLICATION FOR VOTING MEMBERS OF MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

2009 Maryland General Assembly Gets Underway

By Valerie Connelly
MFB Government Relations Director

The 2009 Maryland General Assembly will convene on the 2nd Wednesday in January still grappling with the fiscal issues it left behind last April. The projected budget deficit for the current fiscal year is over \$1 million. The \$34 million budget for FY09 has already been reduced twice this fall. State employees were furloughed and many important programs returned funds in an effort to meet the constitutional requirement of a balanced budget. The revenue forecast has not improved for the year ahead.

When legislators meet over the next four months, they will have to make very difficult decisions about which programs continue to receive funding and which will be pushed to the wayside until the economy improves. One likely reduction target is the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund. This program was established last year to provide funding to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. There was \$25 million appropriated in the first year. A large portion of first-year money was committed to the state cover crop program. The infusion of cash gave us the largest funding year on record – over \$16 million. Cover crops have long been touted by farmers, researchers and environmental advocates as one of the most effective ways to keep nutrients on farms and available for crop growth. The trust fund had been scheduled to increase to \$50 million this year. The increase is certainly a no-go and hope for even minimal funding is slim.

The major revenue/spending debate in Annapolis this year is expected to be over state-aid to local governments. There have been calls for county governments to fund a larger share of pension payments to retired teachers. Under current law, the state pays the entire bill for teacher pensions. Local government advocates argue that they cannot bear the cost of assuming pension payments. While this debate does not directly impact farming, increased financial pressure on local governments often leads to increased local taxes – specifically property taxes – of which farmers pay a huge share in rural counties.

While budget matters will consume most of the session, legislators will still introduce up to 2000 other bills on various topics. Under the rules of the House and Senate, all bills introduced by specified dates in early February are entitled to a hearing. We are expecting to see bills on alternative energy issues, water appropriations (including water rights and fees) and smart growth.

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Maryland Farm Bureau celebrates 93rd gathering



Frederick County Farm Bureau President Gareth Harshman, second from right, accepts the Silver Bowl as his county captured the top award for county Farm Bureau program work. With him from left, are, Chuck Fry, MFB second vice president; Mike Phipps, MFB president; and Pat Langenfelder, MFB first vice president.

By Susan G. Summers
Spotlight Editor

Over 300 attended the 93rd Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Meeting and Convention at the Clarion Resort Hotel in Ocean City, December 7 to 10, 2009. Celebrating record-high membership and program achievements, members also took time to learn, share ideas and establish policy for the coming year.

MFB President W. Michael Phipps of Owings (Calvert County) presided over the 3-day meeting where two state vice presidents were re-elected to their leadership positions. Patricia Langenfelder of Kennedyville (Kent County) will retain her office of first vice president and Chuck Fry of Tuscarora (Frederick County) was re-elected as second vice president.

Silver Bowl

The event was highlighted with the annual awards banquet where Frederick County took the coveted Silver Bowl award for its outstanding program work in the past year. President Gareth Harshman accepted the honor for the second straight year.

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Maryland Farm Bureau

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 Chuck Fry, *2nd Vice President*
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 Brian Johnson, Young Farmers
 Hannah Amoss, Young Farmers

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Maryland Farm Bureau Spotlight is published monthly by Maryland Farm Bureau Inc., 8930 Liberty Road, Randallstown, MD 21133-4295.

•POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Maryland Farm Bureau Spotlight, 8930 Liberty Road, Randallstown, MD 21133.

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New Snow Goose Harvest Strategies Initiated

By Kurt Fuchs
 MFB Assistant Government Relations Director

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently published regulations allowing states within the Atlantic Flyway, of which Maryland is included, to initiate new harvest strategies for light geese, commonly referred to as snow geese, in order to better mitigate the crop and property damage associated with that population's overabundance. Huge flocks of snow geese have increasingly found the Eastern Shore and Maryland's western shore to be an ideal stopover on the yearly migration to their breeding grounds in the north. With ideal habitat in our creeks, rivers and bays and an ample supply of food, many times found in agricultural fields, light geese have been an increasingly significant problem for the state's agricultural producers.

Beginning January 26th and continuing through March 10th, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will allow waterfowl hunters to use unplugged shotguns and electronic recorded calls to take light geese in designated areas of the state experiencing the most severe impacts from the overpopulation of light geese. The use of these special hunting methods is limited to the following areas: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties; the portion of Carroll County east of Route 31 to the intersection of Route 97, and east of Route 97 to the Pennsylvania line; the portion of Prince George's County east of Routes 3 and 301; and that portion of Charles County east of Route 301 to the Virginia line.

Additionally, in the same aforementioned geographic area, starting March 11th, the day after the end of the regular snow goose hunting season, and running through April 18th, DNR will initiate a Light Goose Conservation Season to create additional harvest opportunity. Along with the use of electronic recorded calls and unplugged shotguns, legal shooting hours will be extended to one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset with no daily bag or possession limits.

In order to be eligible to participate in the Conservation Season, waterfowl hunters are required to register with DNR at any one of the state's license agents, via the automated licensing system, or on the department's web page at www.dnr.state.md.us/. The requirement for registration is needed to allow for a follow-up questionnaire survey to determine the number of light geese harvested, methods by which they were taken and the dates they were taken. Data collection is required under the federal regulation for states that utilize the Conservation Season.

Hunters, including landowners who are license exempt, wishing to participate in the Conservation Season must obtain the HIP (Harvest Information Program) permit and the Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp in addition to a general hunting license. The possession of a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (federal Duck Stamp) is not required during the Conservation Season.

For additional information contact Larry Hindman, DNR Waterfowl Project Manager at 410-221-8838, ext 105.

2009 Maryland General Assembly Gets Underway

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How the state handles the confidentiality of nutrient management and other farm plans is likely to be the subject of legislation. The Attorney General has indicated he will seek a change in the law to make those plans public documents. Maryland Farm Bureau is currently involved in a court case against the state to protect the confidentiality of nutrient management plans and farm information. The case is expected to be decided early in 2009. The outcome of legislation to protect or make public the documents will be impacted by the judge's ruling in the current case.

The Attorney General is also pursuing a change in the law to allow environmental groups to challenge permits issued by the state. Under current law, only individuals who are specifically impacted by the potential activity (i.e. direct neighbors) have "standing" to object to the issuance of a permit at the agency level or in court. Under the AG's plan, any organization with a core mission of "protecting the environment" will be able to challenge any pending permit. That means the Sierra Club could challenge a permit to install a well. The Waterkeeper Alliance could use unlimited funding from their headquarters in New York to challenge a Maryland poultry operators permit to build a new chicken house. Under the concept of "environmental standing" business in Maryland could be brought to its knees by advocacy groups that want to prevent development, expansion and economic stimulus in the name of protecting the environment.

On the positive side, we will be working with the Maryland Winery Association to update liquor licensing laws to meet the current needs of the 32-plus potential tourist destinations. In addition to providing good wine and entertainment to Maryland citizens, the local wineries provide a market for more than 250 grape growers in the state. Many Farm Bureau members have added grape vines to their operations as a way to diversify and create value-added opportunities for the future.

Other issues that are likely to be debated this year include: MALPF updates, a sustainable forestry program, tax incentives for the purchase of new conservation tillage equipment, increased farm truck weight limits, disincentives for out-of-state milk processors to sell below-cost in Maryland and new growth management authority.

Maryland Farm Bureau will publish a weekly Hotline beginning January 22nd to keep members up-to-speed on bills that are pending. To access the Hotline, log onto our website at www.mdfarmbureau.com.

Maryland Farm Bureau celebrates 93rd gathering

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Frederick County was one of 10 counties in the running for the honor, having received gold ratings in all six of the program areas. The honors are given for member benefits/membership, legislative affairs, women's leadership/agriculture education, young farmers, leadership development, and outstanding county Farm Bureau program. The other nine counties in contention were Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's and Queen Anne's.

In order to earn an award in any of the six program areas, county Farm Bureaus must submit an essay explaining how the program is communicated to members, what is the member involvement, what are the goals and planning activities and what were the results of the program and activities. The awards were judged and given a score and ranked gold, silver or bronze.

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award was presented to Thelma Bigelow of Kent County. "Miss Thelma" was married to Jim Bigelow Sr. for 56 years and has been active in the Farm Bureau Women's Committee at the county, state and national levels for decades.

At the county level, Thelma has been the Farm Bureau Women's Chair for 30 years. She participates in legislative affairs by contacting elected officials about agricultural issues and has organized county banquets, picnics and Farm City Week activities. She has been an active member of the Kent County Farm Bureau Discussion group for 60 years. This is the oldest discussion group in the state, started in 1938.

At the state level, Thelma served as the State Farm Bureau Women's Committee Chair for 10 years. During that time, the name changed from the Associated Women of Farm Bureau to the Farm Bureau Women's Committee. While chairman, she set and obtained her goal of organized women's committees in all 23 counties. Thelma was a member of the MFB committee that met with Governor Mandel to request the establishment of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. She served on the committee that visited Virginia Farm Bureau to learn about the tire program.

At the national level, Thelma served as vice president of the Country Women's Council for three years. In that capacity, she attended world meetings in Australia and Oslo, Norway, and here in the U.S. where she was the official representative and offered greetings from the United States' delegation. She served on the AFBF Resolutions Committee and attended the annual meeting as a voting delegate for the AFBF Women's Committee for many years.



Thelma Bigelow, in front, accepts the Maryland Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award during the awards banquet. She is surrounded by state officers and her son and daughter-in-law.

Young Farmers

The future of agriculture rests in the hands and hearts of the Young Farmers. To assist in the development of their leadership skills, both personally and professionally, the Maryland Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation organized four areas of competition – the Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture Award, Discussion Meet and Collegiate Discussion Meet.

The winners of the 2008 Young Farmer Achievement Award were Brian and Sarah Johnson of Somerset County and Matt Schnebly of Frederick County captured the Excellence in Agriculture honor. William Layton of Dorchester County won the Discussion Meet honor. All of those winners will represent Maryland Farm Bureau in the national competition at the AFBF convention in San Antonio, Texas, in January. Kelsey Dertzbaugh of Frederick County was the winner of the Collegiate Discussion Meet and her national competition will take place at the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership Conference in Sacramento, California, in February.

Capturing the Outstanding Young Farmer County Group was Frederick County. Chair Becky Burrier accepted the honor from MFB Young Farmer Chair Brian Johnson.

Farm Bureau Women

The Farm Bureau Women are an extremely important part of the organization. Chair Evelyn Wilcom presented the Outstanding Farm Bureau Women's Group Award to Mary Amoss, chair of the Harford County Farm Bureau Women's Committee.

Safemark Dealers

The top three Safemark dealers in Maryland were recognized based on dollar sales volume. The number one dealer in the state was Kinnamon's of Caroline County and taking second was The Hardware Store of Wicomico County. Rounding out the top three was Gibson's Shell located in Anne Arundel County.

Scholarships

Maryland Farm Bureau awards a \$3,000 scholarship to ten young adults from Farm Bureau families and who are pursuing college degrees. They are:

· **Ben Butler** of Montgomery County is the son of Wade and Angela Butler of Germantown. Ben is currently a junior at the University of Maryland College Park majoring in horticulture and crop production.

· **Jeanne Carol Herbert** of Charles County is the daughter of Addison and Susan Herbert of Faulkner. She is attending the College of Southern Maryland and is a freshman biological sciences/pre-veterinary sciences student.

· **Theodore Patterson** of Cecil County is the son of Ross Patterson of Perryville. He is a senior at the University of Delaware majoring in political science.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

February

- 3 Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis
- 5 Maryland Agriculture Dinner, Michael's Eighth Avenue
- 7-9 AFBF Young Farmer and Rancher Conference, Sacramento, CA
- 10 MFB Board of Directors Meeting
- 17 Food Check-Out Day and Maryland Farm Bureau Women's Committee Meeting, Ronald McDonald House, Baltimore
- 27 Caroline County Farm Bureau Banquet, Crowder Center, Denton
- 27-March 1 Maryland Young Farmers Retreat, Wisp Resort

(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.)

Maryland Farm Bureau celebrates 93rd gathering

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· **Benjamin Amoss** of Harford County is the son of Bill and Mary Amoss of Fallston. He is a junior at Virginia Tech majoring in engineering.

· **Michael Amoss** of Harford County is also the son of Bill and Mary Amoss. He is a sophomore at Harford Community College majoring in agriculture business.

· **Marshall Cahall** of Kent County is the son of John W. Cahall, Jr. and Kellie King. He is a sophomore studying civil engineering at Washington College.

· **Ashley Greenhawk** of Wicomico County is the daughter of William and Juanita Greenhawk of Salisbury. She is a freshman at Virginia Tech majoring in dairyscience.

· **Allyson Lethbridge** of Carroll County is the daughter of Stephen and Donna Lethbridge of Union Bridge. She is a sophomore at Hood College studying secondary education.

· **Lauren Marie Roop** of Frederick County is the daughter Sam and Mary Jane Roop of Thurmont. She is a junior majoring in psychology at Grove City College.

· **Stephanie Shortall** of Queen Anne's County is the daughter of Steve and Nancy Shortall of Centreville. She is a sophomore at Delaware Valley College majoring in small animal science.

Retiring and New Directors

Three Farm Bureau leaders were recognized for their service on the Maryland Farm Bureau Board of Directors as they retired. They were Earl Griffith of Anne Arundel County; Gareth Harshman of Frederick County; and Gerry O'Mara of Talbot County.

Newly elected directors to the board were Ross Moreland, Anne Arundel County; Dr. Raymond Ediger, Frederick County; and Eddie Boyle, Talbot County.



Mary Amoss, center, chair of the Harford County Farm Bureau Women, accepted the honor of Outstanding Farm Bureau Women's Group during the banquet. With her are Evelyn Wilcom, left, MFB Women's Chair, and MFB President Mike Phipps, right.

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Farm Bureau leaders pass away

Jarrett Leonard "Buddy" Rice, 79, died Jan. 1, 2009, at his daughter's residence in Newport. Born April 7, 1929 in Newburg, he was a lifetime farmer who loved bird hunting. He was active in the Maryland Tobacco Growers Association, Charles County Farm Bureau (two-time president), Southern States Cooperative, Charles County Soil Conservation District, Charles County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, Charles County Agricultural Advisory Commission, Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland Grain Producers and Maryland Tobacco Authority.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Hospice of Charles County, P.O. Box 1703, LaPlata, MD 20646 or the Newburg Volunteer Rescue Squad & Fire Department, P.O. Box 9, Newburg, MD 20664.

Julia Louise Schnebly, 98, of Clear Spring, died Jan. 5, 2009. Born Oct. 12, 1910, in Charlton, she was preceded in death by her husband, Roy Smith Schnebly, in 1984. She was a former Maryland Farm Bureau Women's Committee chairperson and member of Broadfording Church of the Brethren Fellowship, Hagerstown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Paul Cemetery Association, c/o Mark Schnebly, 12704 Big Pool Road, Clear Spring, MD 21722; or to Broadfording Church of the Brethren Fellowship, 14010 Greencastle Pike, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

2009 MFB Policy Available

The Delegates at the Maryland Farm Bureau annual meeting debated and adopted policy for 2009. The policy document contains our positions on over 100 issue areas covering everything from Agland Preservation and Chesapeake Bay Cleanup to Land Use & Zoning and Wildlife Management.

All policy positions begin with debate among farmers at the local level. Their recommendations are sent forward and debated by the state Board and finally by the voting delegates at the annual meeting. The 2009 Policy is posted on the website at www.mdfarmbureau.com. If you would like a hard copy of the policy, please call Helene Pendleton at 1-800-248-9012 and she will mail a copy.