

spotlight

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A PUBLICATION FOR VOTING MEMBERS OF MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

2008 MFB Policy Available

The Delegates at the Maryland Farm Bureau annual meeting debated and adopted policy for 2008. 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 2008 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.

Farm Priorities in the 2008 Maryland General Assembly

By Valerie Connelly
MFB Government Relations Director

The 2008 session of the Maryland General Assembly gets underway in just a few days. It seems to have rolled around quickly, probably because it feels like the fall special session just ended. While the special session addressed pressing budget issues, raised taxes, secured funding for the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund (formerly the Green Fund) and moved the slots proposal a step closer to fruition, there is still much to be debated in the 90-day session that begins on January 9th.

Maryland Farm Bureau will be working to pursue the four top priorities identified by our members during our December annual meeting. They include agricultural viability, agland preservation, private property rights and tax reform.

In our effort to secure the viability of agricultural
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FREDERICK COUNTY wins top honors at Convention

By Susan G. Summers

OCEAN CITY – The state's largest general agriculture organization put the spotlight on Frederick County during its 92nd annual meeting. The prestigious Maryland Farm Bureau Silver Bowl for the outstanding county Farm Bureau organization was presented to Frederick County, along with the honors for the Outstanding Young Farmer group and Outstanding Farm Bureau Women. The awards sweep was a first in recent history, leaders said.

The Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Meeting and Convention was held December 2 to 5. Over 400 agricultural leaders from the entire state gathered to set legislative policy for the coming year and be educated and entertained.

Frederick County Farm Bureau President Gareth Harshman of Mount Airy accepted the Silver Bowl on behalf of his members. To be eligible for the title, county Farm Bureaus must have achieved excellence – or a gold star rating – in eight program areas, including Membership, Legislative Affairs, Discussion Group, Member Benefits, Information and Organization, Farm Bureau Women, Young Farmers and Outstanding County Program.

"I feel like we won the World Series," Mr. Harshman said. "I have a group of dedicated people that made this happen - I'm just the president, the leader of the pack, and they keep me straight."

Mr. Harshman was quick to point to his county committee chairpersons for the successful year. They are Michael Wilcom, membership; Thomas Browning, legislative affairs; Mary Sue Grossnickle, information and organization; Audrey

Wolfe, Farm Bureau Women; Andrew Keller, Young Farmers; Michael Wilcom, discussion group; Joe Free, member benefits; and Jane Smith, outstanding county program.

"The unsung hero in all of this is our secretary Kelli Wilson," he said. "She gets the committee reports together and submits the applications. She's never mentioned but has a lot to do with it."

Mr. Harshman said he was surprised by the Young Farmers win because other counties have very strong programs as well. "And the Farm Bureau Women, well, I'm just tickled to death for Audrey Wolfe and her group. I depend on them quite heavily and don't give them enough credit for all they do."

"I'm very lucky to be in a county with so many people that believe in Farm Bureau, are dedicated to it and are willing to put in the effort," Mr. Harshman said. "I want future and potential members to know

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Frederick County Farm Bureau President Gareth Harshman, second from left, accepts the coveted Silver Bowl for the Outstanding County Farm Bureau during the MFB Banquet. State officers with him from left, are, Mike Phipps, Patricia Langenfelder and Chuck Fry.

**Maryland Farm Bureau
Officers**

W. Michael Phipps, *President*
Patricia Langenfelder, *1st Vice President*
Chuck Fry, *Vice President*
Mel Hollingsworth, *Administrator*

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Wayne Stafford, Cecil
Pat Wathen, Charles
Brinsfield Lowe, Dorchester
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Paul Miller, Garrett
Samuel Fielder III, Harford
Howie Feaga, Howard
Brian Quinn, Kent
George Lechluder, Montgomery
Chris Parker, Prince George's
Bob McCormick, Queen Anne's
Joseph Wood, St. Mary's
Larry Thomas, Somerset
Gerald O'Mara, Talbot
Galen Long, Washington
William Kenney, Wicomico
Danny Holland, Worcester
Evelyn Wilcom, FB Women
Elaine Moreland, FB Women
Amy Priest, Young Farmers
Hannah Amoss, Young Farmers

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CONVENTION

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we are the voice of agriculture and we are concerned about agriculture and the issues facing all of us every day.”

Seven other county Farm Bureaus were in contention for the top honor. Others earning gold ratings in all eight program areas were Allegany, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Charles, Montgomery, Queen Anne's and Wicomico.

Eight-star plaques were given to leaders from Baltimore, Cecil, Harford, Howard, St. Mary's, Talbot and Worcester counties. Seven stars were won by Calvert, Garrett and Kent counties. In the six-star category were Washington and Prince George's counties and five stars were won by Caroline County. Dorchester and Somerset counties took four stars.

Maryland Farm Bureau President Mike Phipps of Calvert County said, “We are proud of each and every county and the efforts their leaders made this year in each of the program areas. Frederick County should be especially proud of the work they have done on behalf of Farm Bureau and agriculture.”

Mr. Phipps of Owings was elected to the top office for 2008 and will be joined in leadership by First Vice President Patricia Langenfelder of Kennedyville in Kent County and Second Vice President Chuck Fry of Tuscarora in Frederick County. Evelyn Wilcom of Monrovia in Frederick County was re-elected as chairperson of the Maryland Farm Bureau Women and led the women's annual meeting during the convention.

Oscar F. Grimes of Anne Arundel County was honored with the Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award during the banquet. The Davidsonville farmer joined Farm Bureau in 1947 and was the state Young Farmers of the Year in 1955. He served in a number of leadership roles, including MFB Vice President for six years.



Oscar Grimes

MFB Scholarship winners were introduced, including Laura Gaver of Frederick County, Rebecca Hamilton of Howard County and Brenna House of Washington County. Other honorees were Jamie Snider, Allegany; Michael Amoss, Harford; Whitney Hoot and Kayla Griffith, Anne Arundel; Elizabeth Bradley, Caroline; Parker Welch, Queen Anne's; and Randall Blevins, Worcester.

Young Farmer honorees were announced and will represent Maryland at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in New Orleans in January. Those winners are William Layton of Dorchester County, Achievement Award; Jason Watt of Carroll County, discussion meet; Gabe and Kelly Zepp of Carroll County, Excellence in Agriculture; and Brooks Bachtel of Carroll County, collegiate discussion meet.

In February of 2007, then-Maryland Farm Bureau President Earl “Buddy” Hance was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. President Phipps honored the agricultural leader with a wood

carving during the banquet.

Governor Attends

For the first time in recent history, Maryland's governor attended the agricultural gathering. His Monday visit included one-on-one visits with members and an address during the opening ceremonies.

“When you're looking for a mission statement for agriculture – you look to Maryland Farm Bureau,” Gov. Martin O'Malley said. “It is good for all of us if we can keep agriculture profitable in Maryland.”

Governor O'Malley spoke about the importance of the cover crop and agricultural land preservation programs in Maryland. “We've made a big commitment to these goals and need to do more,” he said.

“(In Maryland agriculture) there are many things new to me – just goes to show how little you actually know,” he said. “But I have the ability and opportunity to make a better future for all of us.”

“Thanks for educating me and making me feel welcome.”

Policy and Organization Issues

A major reason for the annual Maryland Farm Bureau gathering is to develop and vote on policy issues that set the legislative agenda for the organization. Because it is a grassroots association, all policy recommendations must come from county Farm Bureaus to be discussed and voted on at the state level.

Delegates discussed six national policy issues and 62 state issues. Amendments, deletions and discussion were lively but only one issue, the sale of raw milk, required a hand vote. Members made substantial efforts on policy for the Chesapeake Bay clean up, “recognizing the Chesapeake Bay as a valuable natural resource...supporting efforts to restore the health of the Bay and ...encouraging farmers to utilize Best Management Practices in their agricultural operations.”

Amendments were also made to the MFB by-laws, most notably reducing the officer team from four to three. Members voted to be led by a president and two vice presidents, instead of a president and three vice presidents.



Audrey Wolfe, center, chairperson of the Frederick County Farm Bureau Women accepts the Outstanding Farm Bureau Women's Group award from MFB President Mike Phipps, left, and MFB Women's Chairperson Evelyn Wilcom.



Delmer Yoder, right, of Garrett County was the top membership recruiter for 2007. He accepted the award from Maryland Farm Bureau President Mike Phipps.

Farm Priorities in the 2008 Maryland General Assembly

enterprises, we will work to encourage alternative and value-added options for farmers. We will look at the health code to identify ways to better harmonize state and county health regulations. We will also work with the dairy industry to implement the recommendations of the Maryland Dairy Industry Oversight and Advisory Council.

The Council met over the summer to discuss the major hurdles to keeping Maryland's dairy sector competitive and profitable. Two major issues were identified – the lack of consistent milk prices for farmers and the challenge for milk processors of out-of-state companies “dumping” milk in Maryland below cost in order to win major institutional or retail contracts.

The Dairy Council recommended two legislative initiatives. The first would create a Dairy Emergency Fund at MDA to provide financial assistance to dairy farmers during periods of economic hardship due to depressed milk prices. This is similar to programs in place in nearby states that are trying to keep their dairy farmers viable. The second would prohibit the sale of fluid milk products in Maryland below the cost of production. This item is aimed at Pennsylvania processors who benefit from price supports under the Pennsylvania Milk Commission and then turn around and sell milk to Maryland customers below their cost of production. This has placed a real strain on the few milk processors still operating in Maryland. They employ hundreds of workers in Baltimore City, Frederick, Laurel, Landover, Hagerstown and Cumberland.

Under the agland preservation category, we will continue our effort to protect and increase funding for the Maryland Agland Preservation Foundation. In this vein, we will insist that transfer tax dollars dedicated to agland preservation not be diverted to other uses. Another important aspect of preserving agricultural land is providing the funds farmers need to implement Best Management Practices, nutrient management plans, cover crops and other mechanisms to protect the environment. Farmers have been asked to take on a larger-than-their-fair-share portion of Bay cleanup. To reach the goals established for farms, new resources must be made available.

The creation of the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund during the special session was an important step in the Bay cleanup effort. The Trust Fund (formerly the Green Fund) will include \$50 million annually from the increased tax on rental vehicles in Maryland. It will not be funded, as once discussed, through an impervious surface fee or through Program Open Space or Agland Preservation monies. Legislators created the Fund during the special session, but will have to come back in January to pass legislation on how to spend it. A bill sponsored by Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh passed the House in November. Under that proposal, at least 30 percent of the funding annually would go to MDA for ag BMPs. Farm Bureau will work during the upcoming session to make sure as much money as possible is dedicated to helping farmers meet Bay goals.

The “Pennies for the Bay” proposal is another potential source of funding to help farmers implement environmental and alternative energy programs. Modeled on a successful effort in Vermont, the folks at the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center are working with Chairwoman McIntosh, Delegate Sossi and farm groups to draft a new funding bill. This concept would allow utility customers to volunteer to make an additional 1 cent or 2 cent per kilowatt donation with their monthly payments into a Fund. The monies would be used to help farmers install methane digesters or other energy projects, implement BMPs and preserve sustainable farm and forestry land.

During all discussion on Chesapeake Bay cleanup, we will emphasize the new policy adopted at our annual meeting in December that calls for more attention to the need for filter feeders in the water column. All the BMPs on farms will not

protect the Bay in the future without a massive effort to restore the oyster population. Our policy suggests that lawmakers consider harvesting moratoriums, restrictions on harvesting methods and Asian oyster introduction with proper safeguards.

On the private property front, Farm Bureau will continue to seek protection from eminent domain takings of property for private use. We will also work to prevent statewide zoning decisions that could hamper a farmer's ability to realize the full equity and use of his or her property. We will be working with Farm Bureau members at the local level as well as they become involved in local land use planning discussions.

Finally, tax reform will be a priority for Farm Bureau and for the folks who served on the Task Force on Tax Incentives for Agriculture. Co-chaired by Senator Roy Dyson and Delegate Rudy Cane, the Task Force recommended several legislative initiatives. They include: expanding the current income tax credit for the donation of preservation or conservation easements; excluding the value of agricultural enterprises from the taxable estate for the purposes of calculating the Maryland estate tax; providing funding for the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition program; preserving ag's exemptions from the sales and use tax; preserving ag-use assessment for farmland; providing incentives for alternative energy development from farm products; maintaining support for the Cover Crop program; and creating a fund to allow swift response to forest health emergencies.

Maryland Farm Bureau's officers and staff will monitor all bills introduced in the General Assembly and work to make sure the policies approved at our annual meeting are conveyed to our elected officials. We will publish the Hotline weekly during the session. This is a summary of bills impacting agriculture and the dates on which they will be heard the following week. The Hotline will be posted on the website at www.mdfarmbureau.com and will be mailed and emailed to members who request it. If you would like to be added to the email list for Hotline, please email me at valeriec.mdfb@erols.com.

Garrett County reaches its goals

The Garrett County Farm Bureau, under the leadership of President Delmer Yoder, was the first county in the state to reach its annual membership goal. At the close of the membership year, Garrett County Farm Bureau membership had reached 204, surpassing its goal of 162 members, by 42.

The board members held several activities throughout the year, including a breakfast meeting in May with state and county elected officials at Penn Alps in Grantsville. Board members discussed a variety of issues with state Senator George Edwards and County Commissioner Dennis Glotfelty and Fred Holiday. During the breakfast, attendees were briefed on the black bear hunt, hunting license exemptions, efforts to extend land preservation program coverage to include land with existing mineral rights contracts, tax issues and the revision of the county's comprehensive plan.

Leader passes away

Longtime Prince George's County Farm Bureau leader Marie Adell passed away in mid-December. She had spent many years on the board of directors and was an honorary board member in recent years.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

January

- 13-16 American Farm Bureau Annual Convention, New Orleans
- 17-20 Horse World Expo, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium
- 30 Maryland Farm Bureau's Day in Annapolis

February

- 6 Food Check-Out Day
- 7 Maryland Agriculture Dinner, Michael's Eighth Avenue, Glen Burnie
- 16-18 American Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher Leadership Conference, Baltimore Marriott Waterfront
- 29 Caroline County Farm Bureau Banquet

March

- 5 Washington Drive-In
- 7 Dorchester County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 8 St. Mary's County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 14 Charles County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 15 Wicomico County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 20 Worcester County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 21 Somerset County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 29 Cecil County Farm Bureau Banquet
- 29 Prince George's County Farm Bureau Banquet

(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
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Maryland Farm Bureau's Day-In-Annapolis

Sponsored by MFB Young Farmers & the MFB Women

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

On Wednesday, January 30, 2008, the Young Farmers' and the Women's Committees will jointly sponsor our annual Day-In-Annapolis. This day of briefings and lobbying will give you the opportunity to weigh-in on important issues that may impact your farm for years to come.

The Day-In-Annapolis is timed to bring you to the State House at a very critical time during the 90-day session – a time when Committees are beginning to make decisions on pending bills.

The day will begin with a legislative briefing by the MFB Government Relations staff, followed by a chance to sit in on the legislative session. A hot luncheon at the Calvert House will bring together farmers and legislators from across the state as all legislators will be invited to attend. In the past, more than half of the General Assembly has stopped by during the lunch, so let your representatives know you'd like to see them there. This is a great opportunity to talk to the Senators and Delegates from your area and to help folks from the city districts better understand your farming business.

Please join us for a very valuable day in our state capital. Our goal is to have representation from every county in the state. We look forward to seeing you in Annapolis on January 30, 2008!

2008 Washington Drive-In

Maryland Farm Bureau's annual Washington Drive-In will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 2008, with a day-long trip to our Nation's Capital. This year we are not holding a Board meeting in conjunction with the Drive-In. Instead, a half-day of briefings and discussions will take place at the headquarters of the American Farm Bureau Federation and then we will head to Capitol Hill to visit our elected Representatives and Senators.

The day will conclude with a dinner on Capitol Hill with speakers from our Congressional Delegation. Congress may still be debating the Farm Bill and Immigration reform early next year. This will be perfect timing for you to influence the debate.

The cost of the Washington Drive-In is \$75 per person. This covers part of the cost of bus service to and from D.C., lunch and dinner. For a registration form, contact your county Farm Bureau secretary or call Val Connelly at (443) 690-2411 or send an email to valeriec.mdfb@erols.com. Registration is limited to 60 people and will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. The deadline for registration is February 14th.

Farm Bureau Cookbooks available... again

Because of popular demand, a second order of Maryland Farm Bureau Women cookbooks have arrived. The hardcover cookbook has over 1,000 recipes. With contributions from kitchens all over the Free State, this collection of recipes is sure to become your favorite!

Purchase one for yourself...and your best friend...and your neighbor...and your daughter...and, well, you get the idea. It's the perfect gift at only \$20 each.

To order, send \$20, plus \$5 for shipping and handling, to David Willoughby, Maryland Farm Bureau, 8930 Liberty Road, Randallstown, MD 21133. Checks may be made to Maryland Farm Bureau. Call (410) 754-9420 or (800) 248-9012 or email davidw.mdfb@erols.com.

