



St. Mary's County Farm Bureau  
26737 Radio Station Way, Suite G  
Leonardtown, MD 20650



**THE BUSHWACKER**  
St. Mary's County Farm Bureau News  
Working for Sustainable Agriculture Since 1947

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**Banquet**

The St. Mary's Farm Bureau Board of Directors has decided to cancel and not reschedule our 2021 banquet due to the current public health emergency. We look forward to the future when we can once again meet socially and celebrate all of the great work that farm bureau does in St. Mary's County.

**The President's Message**

Dear Farm Bureau Members,

Is it my honor to serve as President of farm bureau. I am looking forward to working with the board of directors and our membership as we continue to promote the mission of farm bureau, which is "To protect and grow Maryland agriculture and preserve rural life."

The year 2020, under the leadership of Past President Bryan Thomas, Sr., proved very successful for the St. Mary's County Farm Bureau. Board members served on the Solar Task Force, Animal Control Advisory Board, and a workgroup that reviewed the new county Storm Water Pollution and Illicit Discharge and Detection (IDDE) Ordinance. Changes made to the ordinance, at the request of farm bureau, will align requirements of the ordinance with existing Maryland Dept. of Agriculture and Soil Conservation regulations and practices.

On the Ag Education front, farm bureau continues to support the FFA Chapter and the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) program at the Forrest Career and Technology Center. There are 24 students enrolled in CASE, which is a three-year program. Farm bureau has asked the Board of Education to create a four-year Academy of Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences at one of the county high schools by putting our request in the board's budget. Farm bureau has expanded the Raley Scholarship program by adding a new \$500 scholarship for students going to a trade, technical, or vocational school after completing high school. The new scholarship is in addition to the \$1,000 Agriculture College Scholarship and the \$500 Non-Agriculture College Scholarship.

In the upcoming year, directors will be coordinating with the county Agriculture, Seafood, and Forestry Board to update the agricultural section of the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Directors will also be providing input to the Department of Land Use and Growth Management as that agency begins the update of the county's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Your Farm Bureau, currently representing 365 members, is the leading voice for agriculture in St. Mary's County. It is a strong advocate of safe, environmentally responsible, and economically sound food and fiber production. Our goal is to increase net farm income and improve the quality of life for everyone in the agricultural community.

Sincerely,

James K. Raley, Jr.  
President  
St. Mary's County Farm Bureau

**Welcome New Secretary-Treasurer**

Farm bureau welcomes Mrs. Nicole C. Belkov as our new Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. Belkov was previously employed for over a decade as the secretary for All Faith Episcopal Church in Charlotte Hall, MD. She was hired by the board of directors as a contract employee, effective January 1, 2021. Mrs. Belkov, a farm bureau member, resides with her family in Chaptico, MD.

**Farm Bureau Telephone Number**

The new telephone number for our farm bureau is: (240) 309-4183.

**Legislative Update**

This year, farm bureau hosted a virtual Legislative Town Hall event on January 8, 2021 with 21 people attending. Elected officials attending were: Delegate Matt Morgan, Del. Brian Crosby, Del. Jerry

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Clark, and Commissioner Eric Colvin. Mr. Jaelon Moaney represented Senator Chris Van Hollen. Ms. Gretchen Hardman represented Gov. Larry Hogan. Sen. Jack Bailey did not attend, but he sent written comments which were read to the attendees. All farm bureau voting members were invited by email to attend the event.

Legislative topics discussed by the delegates were: Changes to state procurement contracts to promote purchases from Maryland small farm operations, environmental bills coming from summer study, police reform, and additional relief packages from the state and federal government for COVID.

Two farm bureau members brought up issues which were discussed. One member spoke about Forest Stewardship Plans and woodland carbon sequestration. The other member asked for support for agricultural education legislation that may be introduced this session.

Farm bureau most recently submitted written testimony to the Maryland General Assembly opposing House Bill 472. This bill would completely ban the use of glyphosate in Maryland. HB 472 has been withdrawn by its sponsor. We also submitted a favorable amendment to a House and Senate bill to expand exemptions on usage of plastic bags for consumer purchases made at farm stands and farmers' markets.

### **Annual Meeting Report**

The St. Mary's County Farm Bureau held its 74<sup>th</sup> annual membership meeting on October 13, 2020, at the Agricultural Services building in Leonardtown, Maryland. The combination virtual and in-person meeting was held to elect directors for 2021 and to transact other corporate business. There were 32 persons in attendance, 27 of them were voting members.

The membership approved the report of the audit committee. President Bryan Thomas Sr., and other board members reported on activities for the preceding 12 months. Members also reviewed and voted on issues of concern to the agricultural community, state policy proposals, and the selection of county delegates to the 104<sup>th</sup> Maryland Farm Bureau virtual annual convention.

Several policy proposals were brought forward for discussion and vote at the annual meeting. The first was a proposal to amend the section of the state Right to Farm law for Commercial Fishing or Seafood Operations to support aquaculture. Next was a proposal to increase penalties for thefts from aquaculture operations. Last was a policy to support the right of farmers to purchase trailer tags via out-of-state title service agents. All three proposals were approved at our meeting and were subsequently approved at the Maryland Farm Bureau's annual convention.

Mr. James K. Raley, Jr., was elected president and Vice President Joe St. Clair was reelected Vice President.

Incumbent directors Donny Braun, Sarah Hayden, Tommy Norris, Tal Petty, and Joseph Wood were reelected to serve two-year terms. Farm Bureau members Joan Hill Bearden and Michael P. Van Ryswick, Sr., were elected as new directors. Mr. A. Merl Evans, Jr., was appointed in December by the board of directors to fill an open director vacancy. Immediate Past President L. Bryan Thomas, Sr., will continue in that position for one year.

Please read further in this newsletter for information about our new directors.

### **Farewell to Former Director**

Farm bureau thanks Mr. Robert W. "Bobby" Raley and Mr. Jeffrey Raley, Sr., for their six years of service as directors of farm bureau.

### **Welcome New Directors**

Welcome to new directors Joan Hill Bearden, Michael P. Van Ryswick, Sr., and A. Merl Evans, Jr.

Mrs. Bearden previously served as a director for six years. She resides on her family's farm in Mechanicsville. She is the Chairperson of farm bureau's Raley Scholarship Program.

Mr. Van Ryswick and his family raise grain and livestock on their family farm near Leonardtown. The Van Ryswick family has been very involved with farm bureau for many years. Their children are active in the Tudor Hall 4-H club. Daughter Sara was the 2019 Miss St. Mary's Farm Bureau and also the 3<sup>rd</sup> runner up at the Maryland State Fair Miss Agriculture event.

As a youth, Mr. Evans helped his family raise tobacco, keep bees, and perform other farm work. He has continued to support agriculture throughout his lifetime. Mr. Evans has served on several county advisory boards and commissions.

These new directors bring a diverse set of skills to our board, which will be of great benefit to the corporation over time. Thank you to our new directors and to all returning directors for their service.

### **Seeking Candidates for 2021 Farm Bureau Ambassador Program**

The Miss Farm Bureau and Miss Maryland Agriculture programs have been changed to the Maryland Farm Bureau Ambassador program. The Maryland State Fair will no longer host the Miss MD Ag event. The Ambassador contest will be open to young

men and young women, ages 17 to 21. The program will be focused on advanced leadership and professional development. More details on how the program will work will be provided as they are developed by Maryland Farm Bureau.

Ms. Susan Vallandingham will coordinate the program. She may be contacted at (301) 536-0774 for more information.

### **Women's Leadership Committee**

The St. Mary's County Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee Chairperson is Ms. Abigail Sivak. For information on how you can become a member of your local Women's Leadership Committee, contact Ms. Sivak at (240) 538-3072.

### **NATIONWIDE AGENTS**

Contact one of the Nationwide agents to check on the discount offered on your car, homeowners, and farm insurance. Nationwide agents for St. Mary's County are:

J. Patrick Haley, II . . . . .301-475-2866  
Judi Sterling . . . . .301-994-0401

### **2021 Officers**

James K. Raley, Jr., President  
Joe "Tony" St. Clair, Vice President  
L. Bryan Thomas, Sr., Immediate Past President  
Nicole C. Belkov, Secretary/Treasurer  
Abigail Sivak, Chair, Women's Committee  
Vacant, Chair, Young Farmers

### **2021 Board of Directors**

Thomas Trossbach 1<sup>st</sup> District  
Jos. "Sonny" Trossbach 1<sup>st</sup> District  
Stanley Boothe 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Tommy Norris 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Wes Cory 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Merl Evans 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Brian Oliver 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Donnie Braun, Jr. 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Joan H. Bearden 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Joe Wood 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Sarah Hayden 6<sup>th</sup> District  
Tal Petty 6<sup>th</sup> District  
Michael Van Ryswick 7<sup>th</sup> District  
Susan Vallandingham 7<sup>th</sup> District  
Rita Weaver 8<sup>th</sup> District  
Rhonda Riche 8<sup>th</sup> District

### **What Farm Bureau does for you**

Members have asked, "What do I get for my membership dues?" Maryland Farm Bureau offers members a number of benefit savings on Nationwide Insurance, health insurance, travel and vehicles, services, and industrial products. While these are tangible benefits, farm bureau is also exceptionally effective at representing you in the government relations arena, which is not so easily quantified but in reality gives you the greatest return for your dues

The Maryland Farm Bureau's leadership, staff, and your local board of directors work tirelessly to make sure government officials at all levels understand the impact that new laws and regulations have on your farming operation. Your job is to farm and produce the best product you can. You don't have the time or the energy at the end of your long day to review the hundreds of government proposals that are pending and explain exactly how they might impact you. Through farm bureau, you have a highly trained

staff of professionals to do that for you. Our job is to attend meetings, write position papers, negotiate with bureaucrats and make certain that your net income and quality of life is improved - rather than diminished - by government action.

Farm bureau advises you about legislation in the Maryland General Assembly and the U.S. Congress. The Government Relations team testifies on your behalf before Legislative Committees. Farm bureau represents your interests before state regulatory agencies and at numerous coalition meetings. In short, where else can you get someone to represent you on Capitol Hill, in Annapolis, and Leonardtown for \$70.00?

Farm bureau works all year to promote your agenda and to help improve your bottom line. We know how hard you labor to produce the nation's food and fiber. We thank you for that and we thank you for helping to make farm bureau one of the strongest grassroots organizations in the nation!